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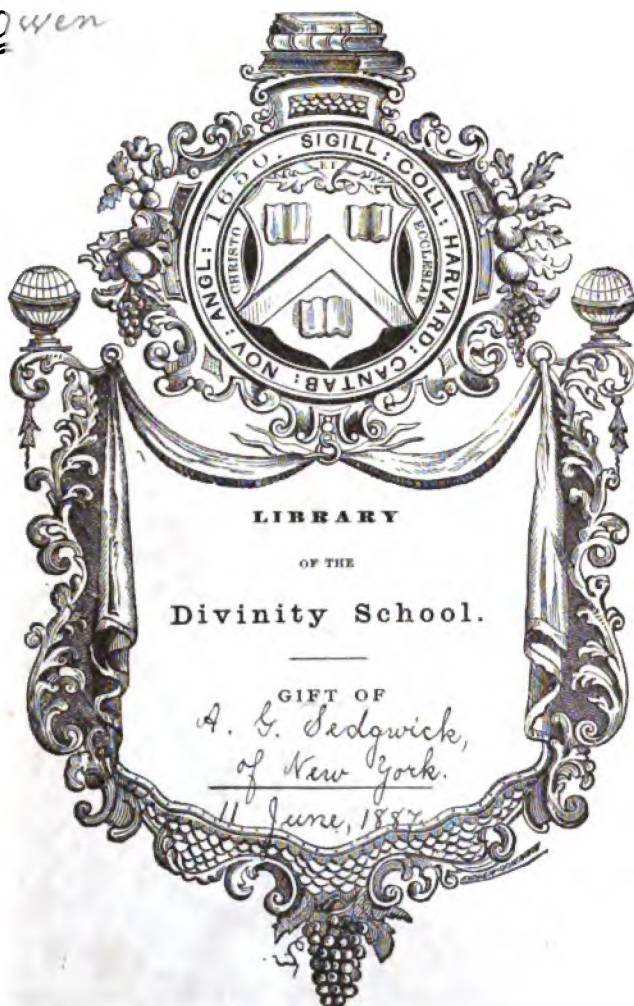
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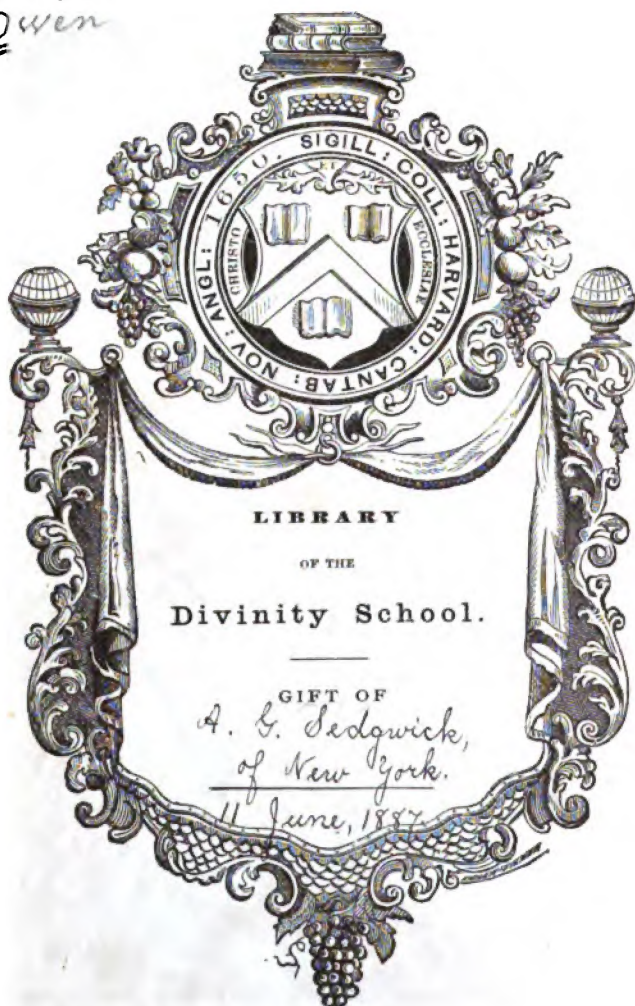


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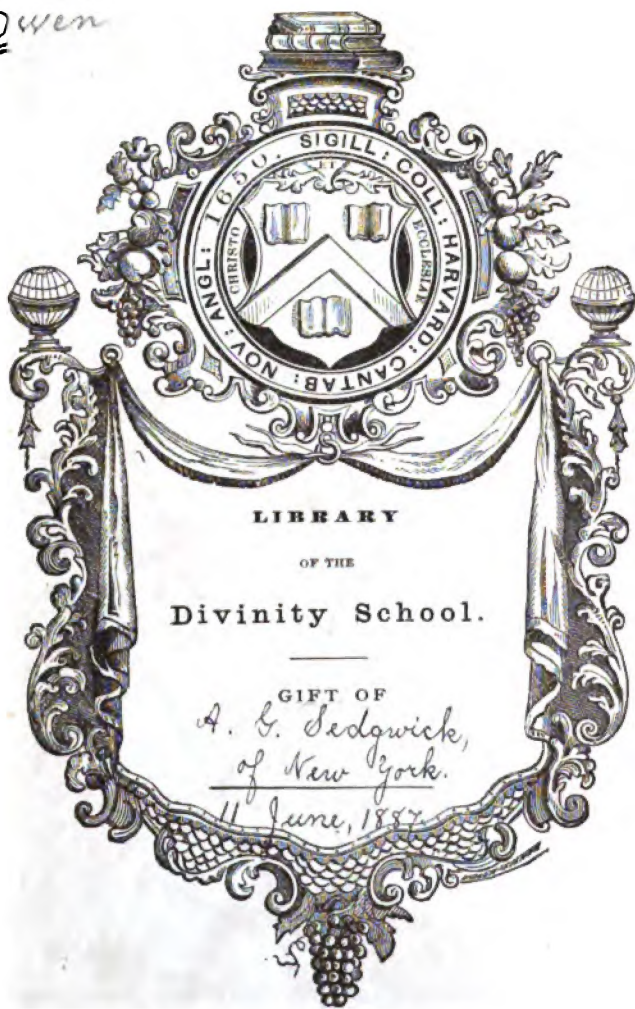




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AN

**EXPOSITION**

OF THE

**EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS;**

WITH THE

**PRELIMINARY EXERCITATIONS.**

1616-1683  
BY JOHN OWEN, D. D.

REVISED AND ABRIDGED;

WITH

A FULL AND INTERESTING LIFE OF THE AUTHOR, A COPIOUS  
INDEX, &c.

BY EDWARD WILLIAMS, D. D.

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# AN EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER X.

### VERSE 1.

*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the  
very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which  
they offered year by year continually make the comers there-  
unto perfect.*

§1. A general distribution of the chapter. §2. The subject spoken of. §3, 4.  
(1.) What is granted to the law. §5—8. What is denied it. §9. (11.) Ob-  
servations.

§1. **T**HERE are two parts of this chapter; the *first* concerneth the *necessity* and *efficacy* of the sacrifice of Christ, ver. 1—20; the *other* is an *improvement* of *doctrine* for faith, obedience, and perseverance, ver. 21—39.

§2. “For the law having a shadow of good things to come.” The subject spoken of is (*ο νομος*, תורה) *the law*, that is, the *sacrifices* of the law, especially those which were offered annually by a perpetual statute, as the words immediately following declare; but he refers what he speaks of to the *law itself*, as that whereby these sacrifices were instituted, and upon which depended all their virtue and efficacy: and the *law* here is the *covenant* which God made with the people at Sinai, with all the constitutions of worship belonging to it; the *first testament*, as it was the spring of all their religious privileges, chap. vii, ix. Concerning this law, or covenant, the apostle declares two things:—*Positively*, and by way of concession, “it had a shadow of good things to come:”—*Negatively*, that

"it had not the very image of the things themselves;" which we must consider together, because they mutually illustrate each other.

§3. (I.) "For the law having a shadow," &c. These expressions are *metaphorical*, and have therefore given occasion to various conjectures about the nature of the allusions, and their application to the present subject. Both what is called "*a shadow*," and "*the very image*," have respect to the "good things to come;" wherefore the true notion of what these "good things to come," are, will determine what it is to have "a shadow of them," and "not the very image of the things themselves." The *good things* intended must be *Christ himself*, with all the *grace, mercy, and privileges*, which the church receiveth by his actual coming in the flesh, and the discharge of his office; for he himself, principally and evidently, was the subject of all *promises*; and whatever else is contained in them is but that whereof, in his person, office, and grace, he is the *author* and cause: hence he was signally termed (*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*) *he who was to come*; "art thou *he who is to come*?" 1 John iv, 3. And these things are called (*τὰ ἀγαθὰ*) *the good things*—because they are *absolutely* so without any mixture. Nothing is *good*, either in itself, or unto us, but what is made so by Christ and his grace; they are the means of our deliverance from all the *evil things* which we had brought upon ourselves by our apostasy from God.

§4. These being evidently the "good things" intended, the relation of the *law* to them, that it had the shadow, but *not the very image* of them, will also be apparent. He declares his intention in another parallel place, where, speaking of the same things, and using some of the same words, their sense is plain and determined; Col. ii, 17, "They are a shadow of things to come, but *the body is of Christ*." For it is the

*law*, with its ordinances and institutions of worship, concerning which the apostle there discourseth. Now the "shadow" there intended, from whence the *allusion* is taken, is the shadow of a *body* in the light or sunshine, as the antithesis requires; "but the *body* is of Christ." Now such a *shadow* is a *representation* of the body; which follows it in all its variations, and is inseparable from it. It is a *just representation* of the body (if properly situated, and without any accidental hindrance) as to its proportion and dimensions. The shadow of any body represents that certain individual body, and nothing else. Yet it is but an *obscure representation* of the body; for the vigor and spirit (the chief excellencies of a living body) are not represented by it. Thus it is with the law, or the covenant of Sinai, and all the ordinances of worship wherewith it was attended, with respect to these *good things* to come. The opposition which the apostle here makes is not between the *law* and the *gospel*, but between the *sacrifices* of the law and the *sacrifice* of Christ himself; want of this observation hath given us mistaken interpretations of the place. The law (*εχων*) *having* it; it was *inlaid in it*; it was of the substance and nature of it; it contained it in all that it prescribed or appointed; some of it in one part, some in another, the whole in the whole. It had the whole shadow, and the whole of it was this shadow; and because they are no more now a *shadow* of Christ and what belongs to him as absent, they are absolutely dead and useless.

§5. (II.) This being *granted* to the law, what is denied of it is added, in which consists the apostle's argument; it "had not the very image of the things;" the (*πραγματα*) *things* are the same with the (*τα αγαθα μελλοντα*) *good things to come* before mentioned. The *negation* here is of the same subject as the *concession*

was before; the *grant* being in one sense and the *denial* in another. It had not (αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα *ipsissimam rerum imaginem*) the *very image itself*; that is, it had not the *things themselves*; for he proves that the law, with all its sacrifices, could not take away *sin*, nor *perfect* the church, because it had not *this image*, or the *things themselves*; so the *Syriac* translation (*ipsam rem.* or *ipsam substantiam*) the *substance itself*, in which sense the Greek word (εἰκων) is frequently used in the New Testament; Rom. i, 23, The *image* of the man is the *man himself*.

This therefore is what the apostle *denies* concerning the law; it had not the actual accomplishment of the promise of *good things*; it had not Christ exhibited in the flesh; it had not the true real sacrifice of the perfect expiation. It represented these things, it was a shadow of them; but enjoyed not, exhibited not the *things themselves*. Hence was its imperfection and weakness, so that by none of its sacrifices could it make the church perfect.

§6. "Can never with these sacrifices, which they offer year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect;" (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές, *in perpetuum*) *continually*, or *for ever*, that is, while those ordinances of worship were in force.

But neither the proper signification of the word, nor the use of it in this epistle, will allow it in this place to belong to the sentence going *before*. It is of the same signification with (εἰς τὸ πάντελες, chap. vii, 25,) *for ever, to the uttermost, perfectly*. What is *affirmed* of Christ and his sacrifice, ver. 12, 14, of this chapter, is here *denied* of the law; the words therefore should be joined with those that follow; "the law by its sacrifices could not *perfect for ever*, or to the utmost, the comers thereunto."



§7. The words being thus read, the *impotency* of the law is very *emphatically* expressed (*ἀδυνατεῖ δυνάμει*) *it can never do it*, by no means, no way; *it is impossible it should*; which obviates all thoughts of perfection by the law. (*Ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις, iisdem sacrificiis; iis ipsis hostiis, or sacrificiis*) *with those same sacrifices; the same*, of the same kind, for they could not by the law offer a sacrifice of one kind one year, and a sacrifice of another the next. But the *same sacrifices*, as to their kind, their matter, and manner, were *annually* repeated without alteration. And this is urged to shew, that there was no more in any one of them than in another; and what one could not do, could not be done by its repetition, for it was still the *same* (*καὶ ἐνιαυτοῦ*) *yearly*, year by year. It is hence manifest, that he principally intends the *anniversary sacrifices of expiation*; when the high priest entered into the most holy place with blood, Lev. xvi; had he mentioned *sacrifices* in general, it might have been replied, that although such as were *daily* offered, or those on *special* occasions, might not perfect the worshippers, at least not the whole congregation; yet the church might by that great sacrifice which was offered *yearly*; accordingly the Jews have a saying, that on the day of expiation all "Israel was made as righteous as in the day wherein man was first created." But the apostle applying his argument to those very sacrifices leaves no reserve; and besides, to give the greater cogency to his argument, he fixeth on those sacrifices which had the least imperfection; for these sacrifices were repeated only *once a year*; and if this repetition of them once a year proves them weak and imperfect, how much more were those so, which were repeated *every day*? "Which they offer;" he states what was done at the first giving of the law, as if it were now *present* before

their eyes. And if it had not the power mentioned at their *first institution*, when the law was in all its vigor and glory, no accession could be made to it by any *continuance of time*, except in the false imagination of the people. It could not make the comers thereto *perfect for ever*.

§8. (Τελειωσαι) *to dedicate, consummate, consecrate, perfect, sanctify*; see Expos. on chap. vii, ver. 11, here the word is the same with (τελειωσαι καὶ συνειδησιν, chap. ix, 9.) “perfect as pertaining to the conscience.” which is ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ, ver. 4. Wherefore it here respects the expiation of sin, and so the apostle expounds it in the following verses; (τις προσερχομενος, *accedentes*) *the comers thereunto*, say we; that is, the *worshippers*, see ver. 2, and chap. ix, 9, those who approach to him by sacrifices, particularly the *anniversary sacrifice* which was *provided* for all.

But as the priests were included in the foregoing words, “*which they offer*,” so by these *comers*, the people are intended, for whose benefit the sacrifices were offered; and these, if any, might be *made perfect* by the sacrifices of the law, but it could not effect it (εις το διηνεκες) *absolutely, completely, and for ever*; it made an *expiation*, but it was *temporary* only, not *for ever*, both in respect of the consciences of the worshippers, and the outward effects of its sacrifices.

However, if any shall think meet to retain the ordinary distinction of the words, taking the phrase (εις το διηνεκες) adverbially, they offered year by year *continually*, then the necessity of the *annual repetition* of those sacrifices is intended. This they did, and this they were to do always whilst the tabernacle was standing, or the worship of the law continued.

§9. (III) From the whole verse sundry things may be observed,

1. Whatever there may be in any religious institutions, and the diligent observance of them, if they come short of exhibiting Christ himself to believers, with the benefits of his mediation, they cannot make us perfect, nor give us acceptance with God.

2. Whatever hath the least representation of Christ, or relation to him, whilst in force, hath a glory in it; the law had but a *shadow* of him and his office; yet was the ministration of it glorious; and much more will that of the gospel and its ordinances appear glorious, if we have but faith to discern their relation to *him*, and his exhibition of himself and benefits to us by them.

3. Christ and his grace were the *only good things*, that were *absolutely* so, from the foundation of the world, or the giving of the first promise. Those who put such a valuation on the meaner uncertain enjoyments of other things, as to judge them their "*good things*," their *goods*, as they are commonly called; and see not that all which is *absolutely good* is to be found in him alone; (much more they who see to judge almost all things good besides, and Christ with his grace "good for nothing,") will be filled with the fruit of their own ways, when it is too late to change their minds.

4. There is a great difference between the shadow of good things to come, and the good things actually exhibited and granted to the church. This is the fundamental difference between the two testaments, the law and the gospel. He who sees not, who finds not a glory, excellency, and satisfaction, producing peace, rest, and joy, in the actual exhibition of these good things, as declared and tendered in the gospel, above what might be attained from the ancient obscure representation of them, is a stranger to gospel light and grace.

5. The principal interest and design of them who come to God, is to have assured evidence of the perfect expiation of sin.

6. What cannot be effected for the expiation of sin at once, by any duty or sacrifice, cannot be effected by its reiteration; those who generally seek for atonement and acceptance with God, by their own duties, quickly find that *no one* of them will effect their desire; wherefore they place all their confidence in the *repetition* and *multiplication* of them; what is not done at one time, they hope may be done at another: what one will not do, many shall; but after all they find themselves mistaken. For,

7. The *repetition* of the *same sacrifices* doth of itself demonstrate their insufficiency for that end; wherefore those of the *Roman Church*, who would give countenance to the sacrifice of the mass, by affirming that it is not another sacrifice, but the *very same* that Christ himself offered, effectually prove, if the apostle's argument here insisted be good and cogent, an insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ for the expiation of sin.

#### VERSE 2.

*For then would they not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

§1. The nature of the present argument. §2. An objection answered. §3—5. (I.) The words farther explained. §6—7. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HE words contain a *confirmation* by a new argument of what was affirmed in the verse foregoing taken from the frequent repetitions of those sacrifices. The thing to be proved is the “insufficiency of the law to perfect the worshippers by its sacrifices,” and the *present argument* is taken (*ab effectu, or a signo*)

from the *effect*, or a demonstrative *sign* of the insufficiency which he had before asserted. There is a variety in the *original copies*, some having the negative particle (*ux*) others omitting it; if that negation be *allowed*, the words are to be read by way of interrogation; "would they not have ceased to be offered?" that is, *they would*; if it be *omitted*, the assertion is positive; "they would then have ceased to be offered;" there was no reason for their continuance, nor would God have appointed it; and the notes of the inference (*επειδὴ*) for *then*, are applicable to either reading.

§2. In opposition to this argument in general it may be said, that this *reiteration* was not because they did not *perfectly* expiate the sins of the offerer, but because those for whom they were offered did again contract the guilt of sin, and so stood in need of a *renewed* expiation of them.

In answer to this *objection* which may be laid against the foundation of the apostle's argument, I say, there are *two things* in the expiation of sin. First, the *effects* of the sacrifice *towards God* in making atonement; secondly, the *application* of those effects to *our consciences*. The apostle treats not of the latter which may be frequently repeated; for of this nature are the ordinances of the gospel, and our own faith and repentance; for a *renewed participation* of the thing signified, is the only use of the frequent repetition of the sign. So, renewed acts of faith and repentance are continually necessary upon the incursions of the new acts of sin and defilements; but by none of these is there any *atonement* made for sin; the one great sacrifice of atonement is *applied* to us, but is not to be *repeated* by us.

Supposing therefore the end of sacrifices to be *making atonement* with God for sin, and the procuring of



all attendant privileges, (which was the faith of the Jews concerning them) and the *repetition* of them invincibly proves that they could not *of themselves* effect that end.

Hence we may see both the *obstinacy* and *miserable state* of the present Jews. The law plainly declares, that without atonement by blood there is no remission of sins; this they expect by the sacrifices of the *law*, and their frequent *repetition*; but these they have been utterly deprived of for many generations, and therefore they must, *on their own principles*, die in their sins and under the curse.

And it is hence also evident, that the superstition of the church of *Rome* in their mass, (wherein they pretend to *offer*, and every day to *repeat*, a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead) doth evidently demonstrate, that they virtually disbelieve the efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ as *once offered*, for the expiation of sin.

§3. (I.) The “*worshippers*” (οἱ λατρευόντες) are the same with the *comers* (οἱ προσερχόμενοι) in the verse foregoing; and in each place not the priests, but the *people* for whom they offered, are intended; and concerning them it is supposed, that if the sacrifices of the law could make them *perfect*, then would they have been *purged*; wherefore the latter (καθαριζεσθαι) is the *effect* of the former (τελειωσαι.) If the law did not make them *perfect*, then were they not *purged*.

This sacred (καθαρισμος) *purification* takes away the condemning power of sin from the conscience, which was introduced on account of its guilt.

§4. “They should have had no more conscience of sins;” rather, they should not any farther have any conscience of sins. The meaning of the word is singularly well expressed in the *Syriac* translation: “they

should have no conscience agitating, (tossing, disquieting, perplexing) for sins;" no conscience judging and condemning their persons for the guilt of sin, so depriving them of solid peace with God: it is (*συνειδησις αμαρτιων*) *conscience*, with respect to the guilt of sins, as it binds over the sinner to punishment in the judgment of God; now this is not to be measured by the *apprehension* of the sinner, but by the true causes and grounds of it—that sin was not *perfectly expiated*.

The way and means of our interest in the sacrifice of Christ, is by *faith* only; now, even in this state, it often falls out, that true believers have a *conscience*, judging and condemning them for *sin*, no less than they had under the law; but this trouble of conscience doth not arise hence, that sin is not *perfectly expiated* by the sacrifice of Christ, but only from an apprehension, that they have not a *due interest* in that sacrifice, and its benefits. On the contrary, under the Old Testament, they questioned not their *due interest* in their sacrifices, which depended on the performance of the rites belonging to them; but their *consciences* charged them with the guilt of sin, through an apprehension that their sacrifices could not perfectly expiate it; and this they found themselves led to by God's instituted *repetition* of them, which had not been done, if they could ever make the worshippers perfect; but in the use of them, and by their frequent repetition, they were taught to look continually to the *great expiatory sacrifice*, whose virtue was laid up for them in the *promise*, whereby they had peace with God.

§5. "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year;" (*αλλα*) *but*, this note of introduction sufficiently intimates the nature of the argument insisted on: had the worshippers been perfected, they would have no more conscience for sins;

but, saith he, it was not so; for God appoints nothing in vain, and he not only appointed the repetition of these sacrifices, but also, that, in every repetition of them, there should be a *remembrance* made of sin, as of that which was yet to be *expiated*. (*Ev αὐτοῖς*) *in them*; “in these *sacrifices*,” we supply the defect of the verb substantive by, “there is;” for there is no more in the original than, “*but in them a remembrance again of sins*,” the sacrifices intended are principally those of the solemn day of *expiation*; for he speaks of them that were repeated *yearly*, which are peculiarly fixed on, because of the solemnity of their offering, and the interest of the *whole people* in them at once. By these, therefore, they looked for the perfect *expiation* of sin.

“A remembrance again made of sin;” that is, by virtue of divine institution, whereon depends the force of the argument; for this “remembrance of sin,” by God’s own institution, was such as sufficiently evidenced, that the offerers had yet a conscience condemning them for sins, and hereby the apostle proves effectually, that these sacrifices did not make the worshippers *perfect*. *Their* confession of sin was in order to and preparatory for, a *new atonement* and *expiation* of it; *our* remembrance of sin, and confession of it, respects only the *application* of the virtue, and efficacy of the atonement once made, without the least desire, or expectation of a new propitiation. *Their* remembrance of sin respected the curse of the law, which was to be answered, and the wrath of God, which was to be appeased; *ours* respect only the *application* of these benefits of the sacrifice of Christ to our own consciences, whereby we have assured peace with God,

§6. (II.) Hence we may infer,

1, The discharge of conscience from its condemn-

ing right and power, by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ is the foundation of all other privileges we receive by the gospel. Where this is not, there is no real participation of any other.

2. All peace with God is resolved into a purging atonement made for sin, "being once purged."

3. It is by a principle of gospel light alone, that conscience is directed to condemn all sin, and yet to acquit all sinners that are purged; its own natural light can give it no guidance in this matter.

§7. 1. An obligation to such ordinances of worship as could not *expiate* sin, nor testify that it was perfectly expiated, was part of the *bondage* of the church under the Old Testament.

2. It belongs to the light and wisdom of faith so to *remember* sin, and make *confession* of it, as not thereby to seek for a *new atonement* for it, which is made "*once for all*."

Confession of sin is no less necessary under the New Testament, than it was under the Old; but not for the *same end*. The causes and reasons of confession now are to affect our own minds and consciences with a sense of the guilt of sin *in itself*, so as to keep us humble, and fill us with self abasement. He who hath no sense of sin but what consists in a dread of future judgment, knows little of the mystery of our walk before God, and obedience to him; wherefore we do not (as the manner of some is) make confession of sin a *part of compensation* for the guilt, or a license for the practice of it.

## VERSE 4.

*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.*

§1. The important ends of instituting the legal sacrifices, though they could not take away sins. §2 The impossibility of atonement being made by them, in the nature of the thing. §3. Taking away sin what. §4. How impossible by the blood of bulls and goats. §5. Observations.

§1. **T**HERE is no difficulty in the words, and very little difference in the translations of them; "by the blood of bulls and goats," he intends all the sacrifices of the law; now, if it be impossible that they should take away sin, for what end then were they appointed?

The answer which the apostle gives, with respect to the *law*, in general, may be applied (with a small *addition*, from a respect to their *special* nature,) to the *sacrifices* of it, "*they were added to the promise, because of transgressions.*" For God in and by them continually represented to sinners the curse and sentence of the law; or, that death was the wages of sin; for although there was allowed in them a *commutation*, that the *sinner* himself should not die; but the *beast* that was sacrificed in his stead (which belonged to their *second* end of leading to Christ) yet they all testified to the sacred truth, that it is the judgment of God that "they who commit sin are worthy of death." He let no sin pass without a representation of his displeasure against it, though mixed with mercy directing to relief against it, in the blood of the sacrifice. Again; they were added as the *teaching of a schoolmaster* to lead to Christ. By them was the church taught, and directed to look continually after *that sacrifice*, which alone could really take away all sin; and in this consisted, we may affirm, the principal exercise of grace under the Old Testament economy.

As to their *special nature*, they were added as the *great instruction* in the way and manner, whereby sin was to be taken away; for although this arose originally from God's mere grace and mercy; yet, was it not to be accomplished by sovereign grace and power alone. Such a taking away of sin would have been inconsistent with his truth, holiness, and righteous government of mankind.

These things evidently express the wisdom of God in their institution, although *of themselves* they could not take away sin; and those by whom these ends of them are denied, as they are by the *Jews* and *Socinians*, can give no account of *any end* of them, which answer the wisdom, grace, and holiness of God.

§2. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats." If in the nature of the thing itself it was impossible that the sacrifices, consisting of the blood of bulls and goats, should take away sin; then however, whensoever, and by whomsoever they were offered, this effect could not be produced by them; wherefore, in these words, the apostle puts a close to his argument, and makes mention of it no more, except for illustration to set forth the excellency of the sacrifice of Christ; as ver. 11, and chap. xiii, 10—12. The reason why the apostle expresseth them by "bulls and goats," while yet they were calves and kids of the goats, hath been declared on chap. ix, ver. 11, 12.

He makes mention only of the *blood* of the sacrifices; whereas in many of them, the *whole bodies* were offered, and the fat of them all was burned on the altar, because it was the *blood alone* whereby *atonement* was made for sin; and there is a tacit opposition to the matter of the sacrifice, whereby sin was really to be expiated, which was the "precious blood of Christ," as chap. ix, 13, 14.

§3. That which is denied of these sacrifices, is *αΦαιρειν αμαρτιας*) *the taking away of sins*, which is to make atonement for it, to expiate it before God by a satisfaction given, or price paid, with the procurement of the pardon of it, according to the terms of the new covenant.

He declares directly and positively what he intends by this taking away of sin, and the ceasing of legal sacrifices; ver. 17, 18, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more, now where remission of these is, there is no more offerings for sin." The cessation of offerings follows directly on the remission of sin, which is the effect of expiation and atonement; and not of the turning away of men from sin for the future. It is, therefore, our *justification*, and not even sanctification, that the apostle discourseth of. It is, moreover, an act, upon *sin itself*, and not immediately upon the *sinner*; nor can it signify any thing, but to take away the guilt of sin, that it should not bind over the sinner to punishment, whereon conscience for sin is taken away.

§4. The manner of this negation is, that it was "*impossible*" it should be otherwise; and it was so, not only from *divine institution*, but also from the *nature of the things* themselves. It had no condecency to divine justice; in satisfaction to justice, by way of compensation for injuries, there must be a *proportion* between the injury and the reparation, that justice may be as much exalted and glorified in the one, as it was depressed and abased in the other; but there could be no such thing between the demerit of sin, and the affront put on the righteousness of God, on the one hand; and the reparation by "the blood of bulls and goats," on the other.

§5. From these things we may observe,

1. It is possible that things may usefully represent, what it is impossible they themselves should effect. This is the fundamental rule of all institutions of the Old Testament. Wherefore,

2. There may be great and eminent uses of divine ordinances and institutions, although it be impossible that in themselves, in their most exact and diligent use, they should work out our acceptance with God; and it belongs to the wisdom of faith to use them to their proper end.

3. It was utterly impossible that sin should be taken away before God, and from the sinner's conscience, but by the blood of Christ; other ways, men are apt to betake themselves to for this end, but all in vain. It is the blood of Jesus Christ alone that cleanseth us from all our sins; for he alone was the propitiation for them.

4. The declaration of the insufficiency of all other ways for the expiation of sin, is an evidence of the holiness, righteousness, and severity of God against it, with the unavoidable ruin of all unbelievers.

5. Herein also consists the great demonstration of the love, grace, and mercy of God, with an encouragement to faith; in that, when the old sacrifices could not perfectly expiate sin, he would not suffer the work itself to fail, but provided a way that should be infallibly effective of it; as in the following verses:

## VERSES 5—10.

*Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then, said I, lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (which are offered by the law,) then, said he, lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*



§1 Introduction and connexion. §2 (I.) Exposition of the words. §3. Christ's coming. §4. In what sense God rejects the legal sacrifices and offerings. §5. What he wills in their stead. §6-8. The Psalmist, Septuagint, and Apostle reconciled. §9-15. Exposition continued. §16-19. (II.) Observations.

§1. **H**ERE we have the provision God made to supply the defect of legal sacrifices, as to the expiation of sin, peace of conscience, &c. For the words contain the blessed undertaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, to perform and suffer all things required by the will, wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and authority of God, to the complete salvation of the church.

This is a blessed portion of divine writ, summarily representing to us the love, grace, and wisdom of the Father: the love, obedience, and suffering of the Son; the federal agreement between the Father and the Son, about the work of redemption and salvation, with the blessed harmony between the Old and New Testament, in the declaration of these things. The divine authority and wisdom that here evidence themselves are ineffable.

§2. (I.) (*Διό*) *wherefore*, for which cause, for which end. It doth not intimate why the words following were spoken, but why the things themselves were so disposed; "wherefore," saith the apostle, because it was so with the law, things are thus ordered in the wisdom and counsel of God; (*λεγει*) *he saith*; the words may have a threefold respect; as they were given out by inspiration, and recorded in scripture; as they were used by David the penman of the Psalms, who speaks by inspiration, and as a type of Christ. But David did not, would not, ought not in his *own name* and person reject the worship of God, and present himself with his obedience in its room, especially as to the end of sacrifices in the expiation of sin. Wherefore, the words are properly the words of our Lord Jesus Christ;

“when he cometh into the world, he saith.” The Holy Ghost useth these words *at his*, because they expressively declare his mind and resolution in his coming into the world. On considering the insufficiency of legal sacrifices (the only appearing means) to make reconciliation with God, the Lord Christ, that all mankind might not eternally perish under the guilt of sin, represents his ready willingness to undertake that work.

§2. The *season* of his speaking these words was, “when he cometh into the world,” (εισερχομενος, *veniens* or *venturus*) when the design of his *future coming* into the world was declared, see Matt. xi, 3.

But as the words were not verbally spoken by him, being only a real declaration of his intention; so this expression of his “coming into the world,” is not to be confined to any one *single act* to the exclusion of others, but respects all the solemn acts of the susception and discharge of his mediatory office for the salvation of the church; but if any should rather judge that in this expression some single season and act of Christ is intended, it can do no other than his *incarnation*, by which he came into the world; for this was the foundation of all that he did afterwards, and that whereby he was fitted for his whole mediatorial work.

§4. (זֶבֶחַ וּמִנְחָה, θυσια και προσφορα) *sacrifice and offering*; in the next verse the one of them, (θυσια) *sacrifice*, is distributed into (זֶבֶחַ מִלְּאִהֶם) rendered here ολοκαυτοματια και περι αμαρτίας) *whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin*. It is evident that the Holy Ghost, in this variety of expressions, compriseth all the sacrifices of the law that had any respect to the expiation of sin.

Of these sacrifices it is affirmed, that God “would them not,” ver. 5, and that he “had no pleasure in them,” ver. 6, (וְלֹא אֶתְּנָהּ, κα εθελησας) *thou wouldest not*;

thou didst not desire. The Hebrew word is (רָצוּן) *to will freely* and with delight. But this sense the apostle transfers to the *other* word (רָצוֹן) which he renders by (ὡς εὐδόκησας; ver. 6.) *thou hast had no pleasure*; in the psalm it is, *thou "hadst not required;"* wherefore, if we grant that the words used by the apostle be not exact versions of those used by the psalmist, as they are applied the one to the other, yet it is evident that the full and *exact meaning* of both is declared, which is sufficient to his purpose.

The mind of the Holy Ghost is plain enough, both in the testimony itself, and in the improvement of it by the apostle; for the legal sacrifices are spoken of only with respect to that *end* which the Lord Christ undertook to accomplish by his mediation; and this was the perfect real expiation of sin, with the justification, sanctification, and eternal salvation of the church; with that perfect state of spiritual worship which was ordained for it in this world; all these things were these sacrifices appointed to prefigure; but the nature and design of this prefiguration being dark and obscure, and the things signified being utterly hidden as to their special nature and the manner of their efficacy, many in all ages of the church expected them from these sacrifices, and they had some appearance of being ordained to that end. Therefore this is that, and that alone, with respect to which they are here rejected; God never appointed them to this end, he *never took pleasure* in them in this view, they were insufficient in the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of God to any such purpose: wherefore the sense of God concerning them, as to this end, is, that they were *not appointed*, not approved, not accepted. No new revelation, *absolutely*, is intimated in the words "thou wouldest not, thou tookest no pleasure," but a mere ex-

press *declaration* of that will and counsel of God, which he had by various ways given intimation of before.

§5. The first part of ver. 5, declares the *will* of God, concerning the sacrifices of the law; the *latter* contains the supply that God in his wisdom and grace provided, answerable to the *insufficiency* of these sacrifices; and this is not somewhat that should help to make them effectual, but what should be introduced in *opposition* to them, and for their *removal*; “but a body hast thou prepared me.” The adversative, ( $\delta\epsilon$ ) *but*, declares that the way designed of God for this end was of *another nature* than these sacrifices were, and yet must be such, as should not render those sacrifices utterly useless from the *first institution*, which would reflect on the divine Wisdom; for although the *real* way of expiating sin be in itself of another nature, yet were those sacrifices meet to prefigure and represent it to the faith of the church; and therefore, saith Christ, the first thing that God did, in preparing this new way, was the preparation of a body for me, which was to be offered in sacrifice.

And in the *antithesis* intimated in the adversative conjunction, respect is had to the *will* of God; as sacrifices were what he “*would not*” to this end: so this preparation of the body of Christ was what “*he would*,” and was well pleased with, ver. 9, 10.

§6. We must, first, speak to the apostle’s rendering these words out of the psalmist; they are in the original, (אונים כרית לי) *my ears hast thou digged, bored, prepared*. All sorts of *critical* writers and expositors have so labored to resolve this difficulty, that there is little to be added to the industry of some, and it were endless to confute the mistakes of others; I shall therefore only speak briefly to it, so as to manifest the *oneness* of the sense of both places; and some things must be premised:

It doth not seem probable to me, that the *Septuagint* did ever translate these words as they are now extant in all the copies of that translation, (*σωμα δε κατεπισω μοι*) but *a body that thou preparedst me*; for it is not a *translation*, of the original words, but an *exposition* of their meaning, which was no part of their design; if they made this exposition, it was either from a mere conjecture, or from a right understanding of the mystery contained in them; the former is altogether improbable; and that they understood the mystery couched in that metaphorical expression (without which no account can be given of this version of the words) will not be granted by them who know any thing of those translators or their work; besides, there was of old a *different reading* of that translation: for instead of (*σωμα*) *a body*, some copies have it (*ωτια*) *the ears*, which the *vulgate* Latin follows; an evidence that a change had been made in that translation, to comply with the words used by the apostle.

The words, therefore, in this place were the words whereby the *apostle* expressed the sense and *meaning* of the Holy Ghost in those used in the psalmist; he did not take them from the Greek translation, but used them himself to express the sense of the Hebrew text; in vindication of this we farther remark, that *sundry passages* have been unquestionably taken out of the New Testament, and inserted into that translation; and I no way doubt but it hath so fallen out in this place, since no other satisfactory account can be given of that translation as the words now stand.

§7. This is certain, that the *sense* intended by the psalmist, and that expressed by the apostle, are to the same purpose. and their agreement is sufficiently plain and evident; that which is spoken is, an *act* of God

the Father towards the Son; the *end* of it is, that the Son might be *fit and meet* to do the will of God in the way of obedience, so in the text; “mine ears hast thou bored” or a body thou hast prepared me; then said I, lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” This is the *sole end* why God so acted towards him. The ascription of *ears* to the Lord Christ by an act of God, is a *preparation* of a state and nature, as should be meet to *yield obedience* to him. In his *divine* nature alone it was impossible that he should come to do the will of God as our substitute, wherefore God *prepared* another *nature* for him, which is expressed *synecdochically* by the *ears* for the whole *body*, and that significantly, because as it is impossible that any one should have *ears* of any use but by virtue of his having a body; so the ears are that part of the body by which alone *instruction to obedience*, the thing aimed at, is received; that is this which is directly expressed by himself; Isa. lix, 4, 5, “He wakeneth, morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned; the Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious,” or, I was *obedient*: and so it is all one in what sense you take the word (כִּרְחַץ) whether in the more common and usual, *to dig*, or *bore*, or in that to which it is sometimes applied, *to fit* and *perfect*. I do not judge there is any allusion to the law of “*boring the ear* of the servant” that refused to take liberty at the year of release; nor is the word used in that case, but another (רָצַע) Exod. xxi, 6;) but it respects the framing of the *organ* of hearing which, as it were, is *barred*; and the internal sense, in readiness for obedience, is expressed by the framing of the *outward instrument* of hearing, that we may by that means learn to obey.

Wherefore this is, and no other can be; the sense of

the words in the psalmist;—that God the Father prepared for Jesus Christ a *nature* wherein he might be free, and able to yield obedience to the will of God with an imitation of the quality of it, in having *ears to hear*, which belong only to a *body*; and this very sense the apostle expresseth in more plain terms, now after the accomplishment of what before was only declared in prophecy, and thereby the veil is taken away.

There is therefore nothing remaining but that we give an exposition of the apostle's words, as they contain the sense of the Holy Ghost in the psalm.

§8. "A body hast thou prepared me;" a "*body*" is here a synecdochical expression for the human nature of Christ; so is "*the flesh*" taken, where he is said to be "made flesh," and "the flesh and blood" whereof he was made partaker; for the general end of his having this body was, that he might thereby *do the will* of God; and the special end of it was, that he might have what to *offer* in sacrifice to God; but neither of these can be *confined* to his body alone; for it is the soul, the other essential part of human nature, is the principle of obedience; nor was the *body* of Christ *alone*, offered in sacrifice; "he made his *soul* an offering for sin," Isa. liii, 10; which was typified by the *life* that was in the blood of the sacrifice; but the apostle both here and ver. 10, mentions only the *body*;—to manifest, that this offering of Christ was to be by *death*, which the *body* alone was subject to; and as the covenant was to be confirmed by this *offering*, it was to be only by *blood*, which was contained in the *body alone*, and the separation of it from the body carries the life along with it.

Concerning the *body*, it is affirmed that God *prepared* it for him; that is, the *Father*; for to him are those words spoken; "I come to do thy will O God,

a body (*κατήχευα μοι*) *hast thou prepared me;*" that which "he would," was the *obedience* of the Son to his will; this proposal the Son closeth with; "Lo, saith he, I come;" but all things being originally in the hands of the Father, the provision of things necessary to the fulfilling of the will of God, is left to him; among those the principal was, that the Son should have a body prepared for him, that so he might have somewhat of his own to offer; wherefore the preparation of it is in a particular manner assigned to the Father; "a body hast thou prepared me."

§9. "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure." Christ, whose words in the psalm these are, doth not only *re-assert* what was before spoken in general, but also gives a more particular account of what sacrifices they were which he intended.

.. "Burnt offerings; the Hebrew word (*קָטַף*) though singular, is usually rendered by the Greek (*ολοκαυσμα*) plurally; and the former word refers to the *ascending* of the smoke of the sacrifices in their burning on the altar; a pledge of that *sweet savor*, which should arise to God above, from the sacrifice of Christ here below; and sometimes they are called (*סִשְׁמִי*) *frings*, from the way of their consumption on the altar by fire.

The other sort is expressed by a word (*חַטָּאת*) which the Greek renders by (*περι αμαρτίας*) *concerning sin*; for (*חָטָא*) the verb in *Kal*, signifieth *to sin*, and in *Piel*, to *expiate sin*. Where it is taken in the latter sense, the Greek renders it by (*περι αμαρτίας*) "a sacrifice for sin," or a *sin offering*, which expression is here retained, and Rom. viii, 3. This sacrifice, therefore, was appointed, both for the sins of the *whole congregation*, Lev. xvi, 21; and the special sins of



particular persons. The one offering of Christ was really to effect what all of them represented.

Concerning all these sacrifices, it is added (ἐκ εὐδοκίας) *thou hadst no pleasure*. In opposition to this, God gives testimony from heaven concerning the Lord Christ and his undertaking. This is my beloved Son, (ἐκ τῆς εὐδοκίας) *in whom I am well pleased*, Matt. iii, 17; chap. xvii, 5. See Isa. xlii, 1; Ephes. i, 6. This is the great *antithesis* between the *law* and the *gospel*; "in sacrifices and offerings for sin thou hadst no pleasure." "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

§10. "Then, said I, lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." (Εἶπον) *I said*. There is no necessity, as was before observed, that these very words should at *any one season* be spoken by our Lord; the meaning is: "This is my resolution, this is the frame of my mind and will." Hence, whatever difficulties afterwards arose, whatever he was to do or suffer, there was nothing in it, but what he had before solemnly engaged to God. (Τότε) *then* or *thereon*; for it may respect the order of *time*; though it is as I judge, better extended to the whole case in hand. When things were come to this pass, when all the church of God's elect were under the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law, when there was no hope for themselves, nor in any divine institution of worship; when all things were at a loss, as to our recovery and salvation; *then* did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in infinite wisdom, love, and grace, interpose himself on our behalf. (Ἰδὲ) *behold!* A glorious spectacle it was to God, to angels and to men: *To God*, as it was filled with the highest effects of infinite goodness, wisdom, and grace, which all shone forth in their greatest elevation and lustre. *To angels*, for in this their confirmation and establishment in glory depend-

ed, Ephes. i, 10; which, therefore, they endeavored (with fear and reverence) to *look into*, 1 Pet. i, 12, 13. And as to men, the church of the elect, nothing could be so glorious in their sight, nothing so desirable. By this call of Christ, "behold I come," the eyes of all creatures in heaven and earth ought to be fixed on him, to behold the glorious work he had undertaken, and its wonderful accomplishment. He came forth like the rising sun, with healing in his wings, or as a giant rejoicing to run his race.

The *faith* of the old testament was, that he was thus to come; and this is the *life* of the new, that he is come. They by whom this is denied, overthrow the faith of the gospel, 1 John iii, 1—3. He that did not exist before in the divine nature, could not *promise* to come in the human. God, and he alone, knew what was necessary to the accomplishment of his will; and if it might have been otherwise effected, he would have spared his only Son, and not have given him up to death.

§11. The end of this promising to come, is to do the will of God; "lo, I come to *do thy will*, O God."

The "will of God" is here taken for his *eternal purpose* and design, called the "counsel of his will," Eph. i, 11; yet Christ came so to fulfil the will God's *purpose*, as that we may be enabled to fulfil the will of his *command*; yea, and he *himself* had a command from God to lay down his life for the accomplishment of this work. When the fulness of time was come, the glorious counsels of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, broke forth with light, like the sun in his strength from under the cloud, in the *tender* the Son made of himself to the Father, "lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" this, this is the way, the only way whereby the will of God might be accomplished. Herein were all the riches

of divine wisdom displayed, all the treasures of grace laid open, all shades and clouds dispelled, and the open door of salvation made evident to all.

This will of God, Christ came *to do*, (το ποιησαν) *to effect, to establish and perfectly fulfil*; he *did it* in the whole work of his mediation, from the susception of our nature in the womb, to what he doth in his supreme agency in heaven at the right hand of God.

This seems to me the first sense of the place; I should not however, as I said before, exclude the sense, that he fulfilled the will of his purpose. by obedience to the will of his commands; hence it is added in the psalm, that he "delighted to do the will of God, and that his law was in the midst of his bowels."

§12. The last thing is the *ground and rule* of this undertaking;" "in the volume of the book it is written of me."

The *Socinian* expositors have a peculiar notion on this place. They suppose the apostle useth this expression, (εν κεφαλιδι) *in the volume*, to denote some *special chapter* or place in the law, and conjecture it to be that of Deut. xvii, 18, 19. David they say. spoke those words in the *psalm*, and it is no where said that he should come to do the will of God, but in this place of Deuteronomy, as he was to be the king of that people; but there can be nothing more fond than this empty conjecture. For,

1. He that speaks, doth absolutely *prefer his own obedience*, as to worth and efficacy, before all God's institutions; he presents it to God, as that which is more useful to the church, than all the sacrifices which God had ordained; this David could not justly do.

2. There is nothing spoken in *Deuteronomy* concerning the sacerdotal office, but only of the *regal*; and in the *psalmist* there is no respect to the *kingly*

office, but only to the *priesthood*; for the comparison is made with the *sacrifices* of the law, but the *offering* of these sacrifices was expressly forbidden to the *kings*; as is manifest in the instance of king Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxvi, 18—20; besides, there is in that place of Deuteronomy nothing that belongs to *David* in a peculiar manner.

3. The words there recorded contain a mere prescription of *duty*, no prediction of the *event*, which for the most part was contrary to what is required; but the words of the psalmist are a divine prediction which must be actually accomplished. Nor doth our Lord Christ in them declare what was *prescribed* to him, but what he did *undertake* to do, and the record that was made of that undertaking.

4. There is not one word in that place of Moses concerning the *removal* of sacrifices and burnt offerings, which, as the apostle declares, is the *principal thing* intended by the psalmist; yea, the contrary, as to the intended season, is expressly asserted; for the king was to read in the book of the law continually, that he might observe and do all that is written therein, a part whereof consists in the institution and observation of sacrifices.

5. This interpretation of the words utterly overthrows what they dispute for immediately before; viz. that the entrance of Christ into the world was not indeed his *coming* into this world, but his *going out* of it and entering into heaven; for it cannot be denied but that the obedience of reading the law continually, and doing it, is to be attended to in *this* world and not in heaven; and this they seem to acknowledge so as to *recall* their own exposition. Other absurdities, which are very many in this place, I shall not insist upon.

§13. "In the volume of the book;" (*ἐν κεφαλαίῳ*) *in*

*the volume, or roll.* But the Hebrew word (ספר) which we translate *a book*, doth not signify a *book as written* in a roll, but only an *enuntiation* or *declaration* of any thing; but another word (מגלה) is properly a *roll*, and the words used by the psalmist signify, that the *declaration* of the will of God made in this matter was *written in a roll*.

As the book itself, was *one roll*, so in the *head*, or the beginning of it, amongst the *first things* written in it, is this recorded concerning the coming of Christ to do the will of God. Now this can be no other than the *first promise* recorded Gen. iii, 15. In this promise, and the writing of it in the *head* of the volume, is the psalmist's assertion verified. However, the *following declarations* of the will of God are not excluded; for indeed the whole volume of the law is nothing but a *prediction* of the coming of Christ, and a *presignification* of what he had to do; even *that book* which God had given to the church, as the only guide of its faith—the BIBLE—wherein all divine precepts and promises are enrolled or recorded.

§14. "Above when he says," &c. What he designed to prove was, that by the introduction and establishment of the sacrifice of Christ in the church, there was an end put to all legal sacrifices; and now adds, that the ground and reason of this great alteration was the utter insufficiency of these legal sacrifices in themselves for the expiation of sin and sanctification of the church. And ver. 9, he gives us this as the sum of his design; "He takes away the first, that he may establish the second." But the apostle doth not here directly argue from the *matter* of the testimony itself, but from the *order of the words*, and the regard they have in their order to one another; for there is in them a two-fold proposition; one concerning the rejection of legal sacrifices; the other, an introduc-

tion and tender of Christ and his mediation. And he declares, from the order of the words in the psalmist, that these things are inseparable, viz. the *taking away* of legal sacrifices and the *establishment* of that of Christ. Again, we may remark, he had respect not only to the removal of the sacrifices, but also of the *law* itself, whereby they were retained. Allowing these sacrifices and offerings all that they could pretend to,—that they were *established by the law*; yet, notwithstanding this, God rejects them as to the expiation of sin and the salvation of the church.

After this was stated and delivered, when the mind of God was *expressly declared*, as to his rejection of legal sacrifices, and offerings, (τοτε) then he said upon the grounds before mentioned, “sacrifice,” &c. In the *former* words he declared the mind of God, and in the latter his own resolution to comply with his will, in order to another way of atonement, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” It is evident, that these words (ἀναίρει το πρῶτον) “*taketh away the first*,” intend sacrifices and offerings, which he did not immediately, but declaratively, indicating the time, that is, when the second should be introduced. The *end* of this removal of the first was the establishment of the second: this second, say some, “is the will of God;” but the opposition made before is not between the will of God and the legal sacrifices, but between *those sacrifices* and the *coming of Christ* to do the will of God. Wherefore “the *second*” is the way of expiating sin, and of the complete sanctification of the church by the coming and sacrifice of Christ.

§15. “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” From the whole context the apostle makes an inference, which comprehends the substance of the gospel. (ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμεν) *we are sanctified*, relates not only

to the *things*, but also the *time* of the offering; for although all therein intended did not immediately follow on the death of Christ, yet were they all in it, as the effects in their proper cause, to be produced by virtue of it in their due time.

This *end* of God, through offering the body of Christ, was the sanctification of the church, "*we are sanctified.*" The principal notion of *sanctification*, in the New Testament, is the *effecting* of real *internal holiness* in the persons of believers by the change of their hearts and lives: but the word is not *here* to be restrained; nor is it used in that sense in *this epistle* or at least very rarely. It is here plainly comprehensive of all that he hath *denied* to the law, priesthood, and sacrifices of the Old Testament, with the whole church state of the Hebrews under it, and the effects of their ordinances and services; particularly a *complete dedication* to God, in opposition to the typical one; a *complete church state* for the celebration of spiritual worship, by the administration of the Spirit; *peace with God* upon a full and perfect expiation of sin, which he denies to the sacrifices of the law, ver i, 4; real *internal purification*, or the sanctification of our natures and persons; the *privileges* of the gospel, in liberty, boldness, and immediate access to God, in opposition to that fear, bondage, distance, and exclusion from the holy place of the divine presence, under which they of old were kept. All these things are comprised in this expression of the apostle, "*we are sanctified.*"

It was the "will," that is, the *counsel*, the *decree* of God, that the church should be sanctified. Our Lord Christ *knew* that this was the *will* of the Father, in whose bosom he was. And God had *determined*, which also the Son knew and declared, the legal sacrifices could not make effectual this his will so as that the church

might be sanctified. Wherefore the "*will of God*," here intended is nothing but the eternal, gracious, free purpose of his will, whereby he determined, or purposed in himself, to recover a church out of lost mankind, to *sanctify* them to himself, and to bring them to the enjoyment of himself for ever, see Eph. i, 4—9. And this will is not at all *opposed* to the legal sacrifices except when obtruded as the sufficient means of its accomplishment. Our *sanctification* is effected by the "offering of the body of Christ:"—in that thereby the expiation of our sins and reconciliation with God were perfectly wrought; and thereby the whole church of the elect was dedicated to God: he redeemed us thereby from the whole curse of the law, the original law of nature, and the covenant of Sinai; thereby he ratified the new covenant and all its rich promises; in short, *Christ crucified* is the wisdom of God, and the power of God to this end. (Επεφάνη) *once for all, once only*; it was never *before* that one time, nor shall ever be *afterwards*; there remains no more offering for sin; and this demonstrates both the dignity and efficacy of his sacrifice. Of such *worth and dignity* it was, that God absolutely acquiesced therein, and smelled a savor of eternal rest in it; and of such *efficacy*, that the sanctification of the church was *perfected* by it, so that it needed no repetition.

§16. (II.) From these verses and their exposition we are furnished with several observations:

1. We have the *solemn word of Christ*, in the declaration he made of his readiness and willingness to undertake the work of expiating sin, proposed to our faith, and engaged as the sure anchor of our souls.

2. The Lord Christ had an infinite prospect of all he was to do and suffer in the world, in the discharge



of his undertaking; and an eternal evidence it is of *his love*, as also of the divine *justice*, in laying all our sins on him, seeing it was done by his own *voluntary consent*.

3. No sacrifices of the law, not all of them altogether, were a means for the expiation of sin suited to the glory of God or necessities of our souls.

4. God may in his wisdom appoint and *accept* of ordinances and duties to *one end*, which he will *reject* when they are appointed to *another*; so those *sacrifices* are in other places, for other ends, most strictly enjoined. How express, how multiplied are his commands for *good works*, and our abounding in them! yet when they are made the matter of our righteousness, or regarded as sufficient to answer the end of our *justification* at the divine bar, they are deservedly rejected.

§17. 1. The supreme contrivance of the salvation of the church is in a peculiar manner ascribed to the person of the Father.

2. The furniture of the Lord Christ (though the Son, and in his divine person the Lord of all) to the discharge of his work of mediation, was the peculiar act of the Father; He *prepared* him a body, he *anointed* him with the Spirit, it pleased the Father that *all fulness* should dwell in him.

3. Whatever God appoints and calls any to, he will provide for them all that is needful for the discharge of such duties as come thereby to be incumbent on them; as he prepared a *body* for Christ; so he will provide *gifts, abilities, &c.* suitable to our proper work.

4. Not only the *love and grace* of God in sending his Son, are continually to be admired and glorified; but also the actings of infinite wisdom, in fitting and preparing his human nature, as every way meet for

the all important work, ought to be the special object of our contemplation.

5. The ineffable, but yet distinct, operation of the Father, Son, and Spirit, with respect to the human nature assumed by the Son, are not only an uncontrollable evidence of their distinct subsistence in the same individual divine essence; but also a guidance to faith, as to all their distinct actings towards us in the application of redemption to our souls.

§18. 1. It is the will of God, that the church should take special notice of this sacred truth, that nothing can take away sin but the blood of Christ alone; hence is the vehemency of the rejection of all other means in the *repetition* of these words.

2. Whatever may be the use or efficacy of any ordinance of worship, yet if they are employed, or trusted to for such ends as God hath not designed, he neither accepts of our persons in them, nor approves of the things themselves.

3. The foundation of the whole glorious work of salvation was laid in the sovereign will, pleasure, and grace of God, even the Father. Christ came only *to do his will*.

4. The *coming of Christ* in the flesh was, in the wisdom, righteousness, and holiness of God, necessary to fulfil his will, that we might be saved to his eternal glory.

5. The fundamental motive to Christ's undertaking the work of mediation was the will and glory of God; "Lo, I come to do thy will."

6. God's *records* in the roll of his book are the foundation and warranty of faith, in the head and members.

7. The Lord Christ, in all he did and suffered, had continual respect of what was written of him, see Matt. xxvi, 24.

8. In the *record* of these words, God was glorified in his truth and *faithfulness*; Christ was secured in his work and undertaking; a *testimony* was given to his person and office; *direction* is given to the church in all, wherein they have to do with God, namely, "what is *written*"; the things which concern Christ the Mediator, are (κεφαλαις) the *head* of what is contained in the same records.

§19. 1. Whereas the apostle plainly distributes all sacrifices and offerings into those which were offered by the law, and that one offering of the body of Christ; the pretended *sacrifice of the mass* is utterly rejected from any place in the worship of God,

2. God, as the sovereign law-giver, had always power and authority to make what alteration he pleased in the orders and institutions of his worship.

3. That sovereign authority alone is what our faith and obedience respect in all ordinances of worship.

4. As all things from the beginning made way for the coming of Christ in the minds of believers, so every thing was to be *removed* out of the way that should *hinder* his coming, and the discharge of his work; law, temple, sacrifices, must all be removed; so it must be in our *hearts*, all things must give way to him, or he will not come and take his habitation in them.

5. Truth is never so effectually declared, as when it is confirmed by the experience of its power in them that believe it, and make profession of it. "We are sanctified."

6. It is an holy glorying in God, and no unlawful boasting, for men openly to *profess* what they are made partakers of by divine grace.

7. It is the *best security* in differences about religion (such as these wherein the apostle is engaged, the greatest and highest that ever were) when men have an internal experience of the truth which they profess;

VERSES 11—14.

*And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

§1. Introduction. §2. (I.) Exposition of the words. §3 The legal sacrifices could not take away sin. §4 But Christ's one sacrifice could. §5, 6. How affected towards his enemies. §7. The perfection and effect of his sacrifice. §8—10. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HESE words are an entrance into the close of the apostle's elaborate blessed discourse, concerning the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, their dignity and efficacy, which he finished in the following verses, confirming the whole with the testimony of the Holy Ghost before produced.

§2. (I.) "And every priest," &c. (Και) *and*, gives a farther reason of the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, by a comparison of it with those of the priests, which were often repeated. (Πας ιερευσ) *every priest*; that is, say some, *every high priest*, referring the whole to the anniversary sacrifice on the day of expiation; but it cannot be here so restrained, for now he makes application of what he had spoken before of *all* the legal sacrifices.

And the following expression, (εστίνκε καθ' ημεραν λειουργων) *stood ministering every day*, declares the constant discharge of the priestly office in every *daily ministration*. Therefore *all* the priests, while it was in force, and their *whole office*, as to all that belonged to the offering of sacrifices, are comprised in the assertion.

*Stood* or *standeth* ready for, and employed in the work of the priestly office; (λειουργων) *ministering*, a

general name of employment about all sacred duties, services, and offices whatever; (καθ' ἡμέραν) *day by day*, as occasion required according to the appointment of the law; for, beside the daily sacrifice morning and evening, any man might bring his sin offering, and trespass offering, his peace offering, his vow, or free will offering to the priest at *any time* to be offered on the altar.

For this cause they came to be always in readiness to "*stand ministering daily*," to which their office was confined. There was *no end* of their work, they were never brought to that state by them as the High Priest might *cease* from the ministering, and enter into a condition of rest; they all fell under the same censure, that they could not take away sin.

§3. They "could not" (περιελειν) *take them out of the way*; that is, absolutely, perfectly, as the word denotes, either from before God the judge, ver. 4, or as to the sinner's conscience, giving him assured peace; no, (εδεπολε δυνανται) *they could not do it*; the defect was in their own nature; therefore they could not do it *by any means*, nor at *any time*, Isa. i, 11; Mich. vi, 6, 7. If the apostle proveth, beyond contradiction, that none of *them* can ever take away any sin, how much less can the *inventions of men* effect that great end?

§4. "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins;" he offered only *one sacrifice*, not many; and it was but *once* offered; and that *before* he sat down on the right hand of God, which was the immediate *consequence* of his offering, see on chap. vii, 3; chap. viii, 1; which here includes a double opposition to, and preference above the state of the legal priests upon their oblations; for although the high priest in his anniversary sacrifice *entered* into the holy place, where were the visible pledges of the divine presence; yet he sat not, but

*stood* in a posture of humble ministration, sufficiently remote from any appearance of dignity and honor; again, his abode in the typical holy place was for a *short season* only; but Christ sat down at the right hand of God (*εις το διηνεκες*, *in perpetuum*) *for ever*, in an unalterable state and condition, never to offer sacrifice any more. God was *absolutely pleased*, satisfied, and highly glorified by his offering; for if it had not been so, the human nature of Christ had not been immediately exalted into the highest glory of which it was capable, see Eph. v, 1, 2; Phil. ii, 7—9.

§5. "From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." I acknowledge my thoughts are inclined to a peculiar interpretation of this place, though I will not oppose absolutely what is commonly received; the assertion is introduced by (*το λοιπον*) *henceforth*, say we, *as to what remains*, that is, of the dispensation of the personal ministry of Christ; He came to his own, very few believed on him; the generality of the people, the rulers, priests, and guides of the church, engaged against him, persecuted, falsely accused, killed, and crucified him. Under the veil of their rage and cruelty, he carried on his work, taking away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Having fulfilled this work, and thereby wrought out the eternal salvation of the church, "he sits down on the right hand of God;" yet did they triumph, that they had prevailed against him, and destroyed him, as some of their posterity do this day. It was the judgment of God, that those, his obstinate enemies, should, by his power, be utterly destroyed in this world, as a pledge of the eternal destruction of those, who will not believe the gospel, Matt. xxii, 7; Luke xix, 27.

After our Lord Christ left this world, there was a *mighty contest* between the dying apostate church of the Jews, and the rising gospel church of believers. The Jews boasted on their success—in that they had destroyed him as a malefactor. The apostles and the church gave testimony to his *resurrection and glory* in heaven. Great expectation there was, what would be the end of these things, which way the scale should turn. After a while, a visible and *glorious determination* was made of this controversy; God sent forth his armies, and destroyed these murderers, burning up their city. Those enemies of the King, which would not have him to reign over them, were brought forth, and slain before his face; and so were all his enemies made his footstool. *These*, I judge, are the enemies of Christ, and *this* the making of them his footstool.

This description of his enemies, *as his*, peculiarly directs to this interpretation; these being peculiarly the enemies of his *person, doctrine, and glory*, with whom he had so many contests, and whose blasphemous contradictions he patiently underwent; and to this, the word, (*ἐνδεχομενος*) *expecting*, better answers, than to the other sense; for the *visible propagation* of the gospel was carried on gloriously *after* the destruction of Jerusalem, and these his enemies; and *expectation* may be no less distinctly ascribed to him, in reference to *this event*, that if we extend the word to the *whole time*, to the end of the world.

The act of vengeance on these his enemies, is not said to be his *own*, but is peculiarly assigned to *God the Father*, who employed the Romans, by whom these rebellious foes were, as the footstool of Christ, absolutely trodden under his feet.

§6. I leave *this interpretation* to the thoughts of the judicious, and shall further consider them according to

the generally received opinion, (Οι ἐχθροί) "*his enemies.*" He hath had many enemies since his exaltation, and so shall have to the consummation of all things, when they shall all be triumphed over. All the devils are in a combination, as sworn enemies to the person of Christ and his kingdom; and for *men*, the whole world of unbelieving Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, pernicious heretics and false professors, are all in different respects his enemies; but "they shall be made his footstool;" (ἐως τεθῶσιν) "*until they be put;*" they shall be *placed* in this condition whether they will or no, as the word signifies. (Ποποδιον των ποδων αυλων) "*the footstool of his feet,*" a despised conquered condition; a state of a mean subjected people, deprived of all power and benefit, and brought into *absolute subjection*. They sat on thrones, but now are under the seat, yea, under the feet of him, who is the only potentate. They shall not hurt, or destroy in the Lord's holy mountain. Sin, death, the grave, and hell, as to their opposition to the church, shall be utterly destroyed, 1 Cor. xv, 55—57. The word (ἐως) *until*, hath here respect to both the *gradual* and *final* destruction of all the enemies of Christ. "*Henceforth expecting;*" expectation and waiting are ascribed to Christ, as they are in the scripture to God himself, only in the *improper* sense of the terms; not including hope, or uncertainty of the event, or a desire of any thing, otherwise than as they are foreknown and determined; but *expectation* here is the rest, and complacency of Christ in the *faithfulness* of God's promises, and his infinite wisdom as to the season of their accomplishment; but, saith the apostle, as to "*what remains*" to the Lord Christ, in the discharge of his office, he is *henceforth no more to offer*; he is for ever in the enjoyment of the glory that was set before him, satisfied in the prom-



ises, the power, and wisdom of God, for the complete effecting of his mediatory office, in the eternal salvation of the church, and by the conquest and destruction of all his and their enemies in their proper times and seasons.

§7. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He did not repeat his offering as the legal priests did theirs; he is sat down at the right hand of God, expecting his enemies to be made his footstool, (wherein they had no share after *their* oblation) "because, by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." This being done, there is nothing that should detain the Lord Jesus out of the possession of his glory. (*Μία προσφορά*) *by one offering*; the eminency of which the apostle had before declared, and which here he refers to.—"Them that are sanctified," those who are dedicated to God by virtue of this sacrifice, and to whom all the other effects are confined. First, to *sanctify* and then to *perfect them*, was the design of Christ in offering himself. So the church of Israel was first "sanctified," *dedicated* to God by the sacrifices, wherewith the covenant was confirmed, Exod. xxiv, and afterwards *perfected*, so far as their church state and worship would permit; but now he hath brought them into the most perfect and consummate *church state*, and relation to God, that the church is capable of in this world, (*εις το διηνεκες*) *for ever*, so that there shall never be any *alteration* made in that state, nor even any addition of privilege.

§8. (II.) From this interpretation of the words, we may make these observations:

1. If all those *divine institutions*, in the diligent observance of them, could not *take away sin*, how much less can any thing, that we can betake ourselves to, avail to that end?

2. Faith in Christ jointly respects both his *oblation* of himself by death, and the glorious *exaltation* that ensued. He so offered *one* sacrifice for sin, as that in consequence of it, he sat down on the right hand of God for ever. Neither of these *separately* is a *full object* for faith to find rest in; but both in conjunction are an immoveable rock to build on. And,

3. Christ, in this order of things, is the greatest example of the church. He *suffered*, and then entered into *glory*. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

4. The horrible destruction of the stubborn enemies of Christ's person and office among the Jews, is a standing security of the endless destruction of all who remain his obstinate adversaries.

§9. It was the entrance of sin, which raised up all our enemies against us; from them came death, the grave, and hell.

2. The Lord Christ, in his ineffable love and grace, put himself between us and our enemies; and took into his breast all their swords, wherewith they were armed against us.

3. The Lord Jesus by the offering of himself, making peace with God, ruined all the church's enemies; for all their power arose from the just displeasure of God, and the curse of his law.

4. It is the foundation of all consolation to the church, that Christ, even now in heaven, takes all our enemies to be *his*, in whose destruction he is infinitely more concerned than we are.

5. Let us never esteem any thing, or any person, to be our enemy, but only so far as, and in what, they are the enemies of Christ.

6. It is our duty to conform ourselves to the Lord Christ, in a *quiet expectation* of the ruin of all our spiritual adversaries.

7. Envy not the condition of the most proud and cruel adversaries of the church; for they are absolutely in his power, and shall be cast under his footstool at the appointed season.

§10. 1. There was a glorious efficacy in the one offering of Christ.

2. The end of it must be effectually accomplished towards all for whom it was offered; or else it is inferior to the legal sacrifices, for they attained their proper end.

3. The *sanctification* and *perfection* of the church being the designed end of the death and sacrifice of Christ, all things necessary to *that end* must be included.

#### VERSES 15—18.

*Wherefore the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more; now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

§1. The connexion and design of the words. The latter part of them elliptical. §2. An objection implied and answered. §3. The words have been before explained. The apostle's argument from them. §4. The doctrinal part of this epistle concluded. The author's devout acknowledgement of divine assistance in this laborious work.

§1. **T**HE foundation of the whole preceding discourse was laid in the *description of the new covenant*, whereof Jesus was the mediator, which was confirmed, and ratified by *his sacrifice*, as the old covenant was by the "blood of bulls and goats," chap. viii, 10—13. Having now abundantly proved what he designed concerning them both, his *priesthood* and his *sacrifice*, he gives us a *confirmation* of the whole, from the *testimony* of the Holy Ghost, Jer. xxxi, in the description of that covenant which he had given before;

and because the *crisis* which he had brought his argument to was, that the Lord Christ, by reason of the dignity of his person and office, with the everlasting efficacy of his sacrifice, was to offer himself *but once*, which includes an immediate demonstration of the *insufficiency* of all those sacrifices which were often repeated, and consequently their *removal* out of the church; he *returns* to that passage of the Holy Ghost, for the proof of *this particular* also, from the *order* of the words.

Wherefore there is an *ellipsis* in the words, which must have a supplement to render the sense perfect: "after he had said before, ver. 11, *he said*," that is, after he had spoken of the internal grace of the covenant, *he said this also*, that their sins and iniquities he would remember no more; for from these words doth he make his *conclusive inference*, ver. 18, which is the sum of all that he designed to prove.

§2. The Hebrews might object to him, as they were always ready enough to do it, that all things were but his *own* conclusions, which they would not acquiesce in, unless confirmed by scripture testimonies; therefore he appeals to their own acknowledged principles of the Old Testament; so manifesting, that there was nothing now proposed to them in the gospel, but what was promised and represented in the Old Testament, and was therefore the object of the faith of their forefathers.

The author of this testimony is "*the Holy Ghost*" not only as holy men of old wrote as they were acted by him, and so he was the author of the whole scripture; but because, also, of his continual presence and authority in it, (*μαρτυρεῖ*) he *bears witness* actually, and constantly by his authority in the scriptures; not to *us only*, who are apostles, and other Christian teachers,

but to *all of us*; Israelites, who acknowledge the truth of the scriptures, and own them as the rule of our faith and obedience. (*Kai to pneuma to ayion*) *even also the Holy Spirit himself*. Herein we are directed to his *holy divine person*, and not an external operation of divine power; and it is that *Holy Spirit himself*, who continueth to speak to us in the scripture.

§3. The words themselves have been explained at large in chap. viii, where they are first produced. We are here only to consider the apostle's *argument* from the latter part of them; which is, that the covenant being confirmed and established, by the one sacrifice of Christ, there can be no more offering for sin; for God will never appoint what is needless in his service, least of all in things of so great importance as *offering for sin*; yea, the continuation of such sacrifices will overthrow the faith of the church and all the grace of the new covenant; for, saith the apostle, and the Holy Ghost testifieth, that as it was confirmed by the one sacrifice of Christ, perfect pardon and forgiveness of sin is prepared for the whole church, and tendered to every believer. To what purpose then should there be any more offerings for sin? Yea, they who look for, and trust to any other, despise the wisdom and grace of God, the blood of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Ghost, for which there is no remission, ver. 28, 29.

§4. And here we are come to a full end of what we may call the *dogmatical part* of this epistle, a portion of scripture filled with heavenly and glorious mysteries, and may well be termed, in a sense, "the light of the Gentile church, the glory of the people Israel," the foundation and bulwark of evangelical faith.

I do therefore here, with all humility, with a sense of my own weakness and utter disability for so great a

work, thankfully own the guidance and assistance, which hath been given me in the interpretation of it, as a mere effect of sovereign and undeserved grace; from that alone it is, that having, many and many a time, been at an utter loss as to the mind of the Holy Ghost, and finding no relief in the worthy labors of others, he hath graciously answered my poor weak supplications in supplies of the light and evidence of truth.

## VERSES 19—23.

*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.*

§1. The apostle's professed design. The subject stated. §2—6. (I.) The ground and reason of the exhortation. §7—10. (II.) The manner of our using this privilege. §11, 12. (III.) The special duty exhorted to. §13—16. (IV.) Observations.

§1. **I**N these words the apostle enters on the *last part* of the epistle, which is altogether *hortatory*; for though there be some occasional intermixtures of doctrines, consonant to those before insisted on, yet the *professed design* is to propose to, and press on the Hebrews such duties as the truth he had insisted on direct to, and make necessary to all believers; and in all his exhortations there is a mixture of the ground of those duties, their necessity, and privilege. In these words there are three things:

**I.** The *ground and reason* of the duty exhorted to, with the foundation of it, as the special privilege of the gospel, ver. 19—21.

II. The *way and manner* of our using this privilege to that end, ver. 22.

III. The *special duty* exhorted to, which is, *perseverance*, and constancy in believing, ver. 28.

§2. (I.) Having therefore, (*ἀδελφοί*) *brethren*, he hath in this appellation a peculiar respect to those among the Hebrews, who had received the gospel in *sincerity*; had he called them *heretics* and *schismatics*, and I know not what other names of reproach, he had, in all probability, "turned that which was lame quite out of the way;" but he had another spirit, was under another conduct of wisdom and grace, than most men are now acquainted with. (*Ὅν*) *therefore*, seeing that things are now made manifest to you, seeing it is so evidently testified unto in holy writ, that the old covenant sacrifices and worship could not make us perfect, nor give us access to God; and seeing all things are accomplished by the office and sacrifice of Christ; and seeing privileges are thereon granted to believers which they were not before made partakers of;—*let us make use of them* to the glory of God, and our own salvation, in the duties which they necessarily require, and which duties are utterly inconsistent with Mosaical worship. We may now freely enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; but an entrance, in any sense, into the most holy place, is inconsistent with, and destructive of all Mosaical institutions. "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest," the privilege intended is directly opposed to the state of things under the law; they therefore are utterly mistaken who suppose this entrance to be an entrance into *heaven after this life* for all believers; or the apostle doth not here oppose the glorious state of heaven to the church of the Hebrews, and their legal services; but the privileges of the *gospel state* and wor-

ship only; neither were believers then also excluded from heaven after death, any more than now; therefore the privilege mentioned consists in our *drawing nigh* to God in holy services and worship through Christ, ver. 22, 23.

(Παρρησιαν) *boldness*. There were two things with respect to those worshippers in this matter;—a legal prohibition from entering into the holy place; and—a dread and fear, which deprived them of all boldness, or holy confidence, in their approaches to God; therefore the apostle expresseth the contrary frame of believers under the New Testament by a word that signifieth both *liberty*, or freedom from any prohibition, and *boldness* with confidence in the exercise of that liberty; we have a right to it, we have liberty without restraint, and we have confidence without dread.

“To enter into the *holiest*,” that is, the *true sanctuary*, the holy place not made with hands, see chap. ix, 11, 12, the *immediate* gracious *presence* of God himself in Christ Jesus. Whatever was typically represented in the most holy place of old, we have access to, even to God himself, in one Spirit by Christ.

§3. (Εν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ) *by the blood of Jesus*, the procuring cause of this privilege, and which is the same with his *sacrifice*, or the once offering of his body, By its *oblation*, all causes of distance between God and believers were removed; it made *atonement* for them, answered the law, removed the curse, broke down the partition wall, or the law of commandments contained in ordinances, wherein were all the prohibitions of approaching to God with boldness. Again, there are not only hindrances on the part of God lying in the way of our access to him, but also the *consciences* of men, from a sense of guilt, were filled with *fear and dread*, and durst not so much as desire an immediate



access to God. The efficacy of the blood of Christ being, through believing, communicated to them, takes away all this discouraging fear, being accompanied with the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of liberty.

§4. Having told us that we have, (τὴν εἰσοδὸν) *an entrance* into the holiest, he now declares by what way we may enter; the way into the holiest under the tabernacle was "a passage with blood through the sanctuary, and then a turning aside of the veil," as we have declared before, but the *whole church* was forbidden the use of this way, and it was appointed for no other end but to signify, that in due time there should be a way opened to believers to the presence of God, which was not yet prepared.

The preparation of this way is by (ἐγκαινισμός) *a dedication*; the word (ἐγκαινίζειν) hath a double signification, one natural, the other sacred; which yet are of no affinity to one another. In things *natural* it is to *make new*, so as to be ready for use; in things *sacred*, it is to *dedicate* or consecrate any thing, at its first erection or making, to sacred services; the *latter* sense, as in our translation, is here to be embraced, yet so as it includes the former also; for it is spoken in opposition to the dedication of the tabernacle, and way into the most holy place, by the blood of sacrifices, whereof we have treated in the *ninth chapter*; so was this way into the holy place dedicated, and set apart sacredly for the use of believers, so that there can never be any other way but—*by the blood of Jesus*; and the way itself was moreover—*new prepared and made*, not being extant before. The properties of this way are two:

1. It is (πρὸς φάτος) *new*, because it was but *newly made* and prepared; belongs to the *new covenant*, and admits of no decays, but is *always new*, as to its effica-

by and use, as in the day of its first preparation; whereas that of the tabernacle *waxed old*, and so was prepared for a *removal*; but this way shall never be changed, shall never decay, being always *new*.

2. It is (*συνα*) *living*, not only in opposition to the way into the holiest in the tabernacle, (which was a sure cause of *death* to any one that should make use of it, the high priest only excepted, and he but once a year;) but also as to its *efficacy*; it is not a dead thing, but hath a spiritual *vital* efficacy in our access to God, and effectually leads to *life everlasting*.

This "new and living way of our approach to God" is nothing but the *exercise of faith* for acceptance with God by the sacrifice of Christ according to the revelation made of it in the gospel.

§5. "Through the veil;" referring to that between the sanctuary and the most holy place, which we have before described, chap. ix. What this veil was to the high priest in his entrance into that holy place, that is the *flesh of Christ* to us in our approach to God: He, indeed, entered into it by *turning the veil aside*, on whom it immediately closed again; but there could be no passage laid open, no general *abiding entrance* into that holy place, unless the veil was rent and torn in pieces, so that it could close no more. Hence, on our Lord's death, the veil of the temple was "rent from the top to the bottom;" signifying that, by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, whereby his flesh was torn and rent, we have a *full entrance* into the holy place, such as would have been of old upon the rending of the veil. This, therefore, is the genuine interpretation of this place; "we enter with boldness to the most holy place through the veil," that is to say, his flesh, "by virtue of the sacrifice of himself, wherein his flesh was rent, and all hindrances taken away." Of all which

*hindrances* the veil was an emblem, until it was rent and removed.

§6. "And having a great high priest over the house of God." *Having* is understood from ver. 19. It may be said, notwithstanding the provision of a *new way* into the holiest, and boldness to enter, yet in ourselves we know not how to do it, unless we are under the conduct of a *priest*, as the church of old was, in its worship. The apostle removes the discouraging thought; "we have a great High Priest," so great, as that he can save us to the uttermost; so glorious, that we ought to apply ourselves to him with reverence and godly fear. "*Over* the house of God;" intimating what he is and doth *after* his sacrifice, now he is exalted in heaven; for this was the *second part* of the high priest's office. He is *over* the house of God to order all things to his glory, and the salvation of the church. "*The house of God*," that is, the *whole house*, the family of heaven and earth, and particularly the church here below, to whom this encouragement is given, that they have a High Priest as a motive of *drawing nigh*. And it is in the *heavenly sanctuary* he administereth the house of God above, into which we enter by our prayers and sacred worship;—"so is he for ever over his own house."

§7. (II.) The way and manner of using the above privilege. "*Let us draw near* (*προσερχομεθα*) with a true heart;" the word whereby the whole performance of all solemn divine worship was constantly expressed; for God having fixed the *signs of his presence* to a certain place, the tabernacle and altar, none could worship him but by an *approach* to that place; every thing in their worship was an *approximation* to God. And seeing their tabernacle, temple, altar, &c. were types of Christ, and the gracious presence of God in

him, this "*drawing near*" containeth all the holy worship of the church, both public and private, or, all the ways of our access to God by Christ."

(Μετα αληθινῆς καρδίας) *with a true heart*. God in an especial manner, requireth "truth in the inward parts," in all that come to him, Psal. li, 6; John iv, 24. Now "*truth*" respects either the *mind*, and is opposed to falsehood, or respects the *heart* and affections, and is opposed to hypocrisy. In the first way all *false worship* is rejected; but the "*truth of the heart*" here intended, is the *sincerity* of the heart, which is opposed to all hypocrisy.

§8. (Εν πληροφορίᾳ τῆς πίστεως) *in full assurance of faith*. "Without faith it is impossible to *please* God;" wherefore faith is required in this access on a twofold account—as a qualification of the *person*; he must be a true *believer*, all others being utterly excluded from it;—as to *actual exercise* in every particular duty of access. There is no duty acceptable to God which is not enlivened by *faith*. "*All full assurance of faith*." The word is used only in this place, but the verb (πληροφορεῖν, Rom. iv, 21; xiv, 5,) signifies a "*full satisfaction* of mind in what we are persuaded of." Here two things seem to be included in the word:

1. What in other places the apostle expresseth by (παρρησία) *boldness*, which is the word constantly used to denote that frame of mind which ought to be in gospel worshippers, in opposition to that of the law; and implies an *open view* of spiritual glories, which they had not joined with liberty and confidence; liberty of speech and confidence of being accepted; the *plerophory* of faith is the "*spiritual boldness*" of it.

2. A firm and *immoveable persuasion* concerning the *priesthood* of Christ, whereby we have this access to God, with the glory and efficacy of it, "faith with-

out wavering;" for many of the Hebrews who had received in general the faith of the gospel, yet *wavered* up and down in their minds about this office of Christ, and the glorious things related of it, supposing that there might be some place yet left for the administration of the legal high priest. This is the frame which the apostle confutes, and therefore "the full assurance of faith" here respects not the assurance that any have of *their own salvation*, nor *any degree* of such an assurance, but intends only the full satisfaction of our souls and consciences in the reality and efficacy of *the priesthood of Christ* to give us acceptance with God, in opposition to all other ways and means. But this *persuasion* withal is accompanied with an *assured trust* of our own *acceptance* with God, through Christ our high priest, and an acquiescence of our souls in the blessed object of our trust.

§9. There is a two-fold preparation prescribed to us for the right discharge of this duty;—that our "hearts be sprinkled from an evil conscience," and "that our bodies be washed with pure water;" it is plain that these expressions *allude* to the necessary preparations of divine service under the law. For whereas there were various ways, whereby men were legally *defiled*, so there were ways appointed for their legal *purification*, chap. ix.

The subject spoken of is also twofold—the *heart* and the *body*, that is, the *inward* and *outward* man. There is no doubt but in this place, as in many others, the *heart* is taken for *all the faculties* of our souls with our affections; for it is that wherein *conscience* is seated, and in which it powerfully acts, which it doth especially in the practical understanding, as the rule and guide of the affections.

This *conscience*, antecedently, is *evil*. Conscience,

merely as such, is not to be separated from the heart, but as it is evil it should. It may be said to be "evil" on two accounts;—as it *disquieteth*, perplexeth, judgeth, and condemneth for sin, and—on account of a *vitiated principle* in the conscience not performing its duty, but continues secure when filled with all vicious habits: I take it here in the *latter* sense, because the way of removal is by *sprinkling*, and not by *offering*.

(Ερρατισμεναι τας καρδιας) *sprinkling our hearts*. The expression is taken from the sprinkling of blood upon offering the sacrifices, Exod. xxix, 16, 21; Lev. iv, 17; xiv, 7. The spiritual interpretation is given us, Ezek. xxxvi, 25. And whereas this *sprinkling* and cleansing from sin is in Ezekiel ascribed to *pure water*, (for in the type the *blood* of the sacrifice was sprinkled) it gives us the sense of the whole: for as the blood of the sacrifice was a type of the *blood of Christ* as offered to God, so the *Holy Spirit*, and his efficacious work, is denoted by "pure water," as is frequently observed. Wherefore this "*sprinkling* of our hearts" is an act of the *sanctifying* power of the Holy Ghost, by virtue of the blood and sacrifice of Christ in making application of them to our souls. And thus "the blood of Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all our sins."

§10. "Our bodies washed with pure water." This at first view may seem to refer to the outward administration of *baptism*; but the "*body*" is said to be *washed* from them, because they are *outward*, in opposition to those that are only *inherent* in the mind. And because the *body* is the instrument of the perpetration of them, hence are they called the "deeds of the body;" and the body is defiled by some of them in an especial manner, 1 Cor. vi. Therefore, the "pure water" wherewith the body is to be washed, and which is divinely promised, Ezek. xxxvi, 25, 26, is the assistance

of the sanctifying Spirit, by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. Hereby all those sins which cleave to our *outward conversation* are removed and washed away; for we are *sanctified*, (called by the gospel to be so) in our whole *spirits, souls, and bodies*.

§11. (III.) The special duty exhorted to. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful who hath promised." Some copies read (την ομολογίαν της ελπίδος) "the profession of our *hope*," which virtually comes to the same with our version; for on our faith is our hope built, and is an eminent fruit of it: wherefore, holding fast our *hope* includes in it the holding fast of our *faith*, as the cause in the effect. But I prefer the *other* reading, as more suited to the design of the apostle, and his following discourse.

"*Faith*" is here taken in both the principal acceptations of it, namely, that faith whereby we *believe*, and that *doctrine* which is believed; of both which we make the same profession: of one as the *inward principle*, of the other as the *outward rule*. Of the meaning of the word itself, (ομολογια) *joint profession*, I have treated largely elsewhere. Chap. iii, 1.

The *continuation* of their profession first solemnly made, avowing the faith on all just occasions, attending on all duties of worship required in the gospel, professing their faith in the promises of God by Christ, and cheerfully undergoing afflictions, troubles, and persecutions on that account, is eminently included in this "profession of our faith" here exhorted to.

But what is it to *hold fast* this profession? see chap. iv, 14. There is included—a supposition of *great difficulty with danger*, and opposition against this holding; therefore the *putting forth* of the utmost of our strength and *endeavors* in the defence of it, and a *constant perseverance* in it.

This is to be done "*without wavering*;" that is, the profession must be *immoveable and constant*. The frame of mind which this is opposed to, is expressed James i, 6, (*διακρινόμενος*) *one that is always disputing*, and tossed up and down with various thoughts in his mind, not coming to a fixed determination: he is like *a wave of the sea*, which one while subsides and is quiet, and another while is tossed this way or that, as it receives impressions from the wind. As men's *minds* waver in these things, so their *profession* wavers, which the apostle here opposeth to that *full assurance* of faith required in us. (*Ἀκλινής*) *without wavering*; the word denotes, *not to be bent* one way or other; firm, fixed, stable, in opposition to them; wherefore, it includes—positively, a *firm persuasion* of mind as to the truth of the faith professed;—a *constant resolution* to abide therein, and adhere to it against all opposition, and—constancy and *diligence* in the performance of all the duties which are required to the continuation of this profession.

§12. "For he is faithful that hath promised." In opening these words, let us attend to the nature of the encouragement given us in them.

1. It is *God* alone who promiseth. He alone is the *author* of all gospel promises; and by him are they *given* to us, 2 Pet. i, 4; Tit. i, 1 Hence, evangelically, that is a just *periphrasis* of God, "he who hath promised."

2. The *promises* of God are of that nature in themselves, as are suited to the encouragement of all believers to constancy, and final perseverance, in the profession of their faith; whether we respect them, as they contain and exhibit *present* grace, mercy, and consolation, or as they propose to us eternal things in the *future* glorious reward.



The *efficacy* of the promises to this end depends upon the faithfulness of God who gives them; with him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent. God's faithfulness is the unchangeableness of his purpose, and the counsels of his will, proceeding from the immutability of his nature, accompanied with almighty power for their accomplishment, as declared in the word; see chap. vi, 18. Consider, saith he, the promises of the gospel, their incomparable greatness and glory; in their enjoyment consists our eternal blessedness, and they will all be accomplished towards those who hold fast their profession, seeing he who hath promised them is *absolutely faithful* and unchangeable.

§13. (IV.) From the whole observe,

1. It is not every mistake, every error though it be in things of great importance, while it overthrows not the foundation, that can divest men of a fraternal interest with others in the heavenly calling.

2. This is the great fundamental principle of the gospel, that believers, in all their holy worship, have liberty, boldness, and confidence, to enter into this gracious presence of God; they are not hindered by any prohibition. There is no such order now, that he who draws nigh shall be cut off; but, on the contrary, that he who *doth not* shall be destroyed.

3. Hence there is no room for terror in their consciences, when they make those approaches to God. They have not received the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of the Son, whereby with holy boldness they cry, "Abba, Father," for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

4. The nature of gospel worship consists in an entrance with reverential boldness into the presence of God.

5. Our approach to God in gospel worship is to him as evidencing himself in a way of *grace and mercy*. Hence it is said to be an entrance into the *holiest*, for in the holy place were all the pledges and tokens of God's favor.

6. Nothing but the *blood of Jesus* could have given this boldness, nothing that stood in its way could otherwise have been removed, nothing else could have set our souls at liberty from that bondage, which was come upon them by sin. What shall we render to him! How unspeakable are our obligations! How should we abound in faith and love!

7. Confidence in *access* to God not built on, not resolved into the *blood of Christ*, is but a daring presumption which God abhors.

§14. 1. The way of our entrance into the holiest is solemnly dedicated and *consecrated* for us, so that we may make use of it with becoming boldness.

2. All the privileges we have by Christ are great, glorious, and efficacious, all tending and leading unto life.

3. The Lord Christ peculiarly presides over all the persons, duties, and worship of believers in the church of God. See Exposition, chap. iv, 14—16.

4. The *heart* is that which God principally respects in our access to him; and universal internal sincerity of heart is required of all those, who draw nigh to him in his holy worship.

5. The *actual exercise* of faith is required in all our approaches to God, in every particular duty of his worship.

6. And it is *faith in Christ* alone that gives this boldness of access; and the person and office of Christ are to be rested in with *full assurance* in all our accesses to the throne of grace.

§15. 1. Although the worship whereby we draw nigh to God be performed with respect to institution and rule, yet without *internal sanctification* of heart we are not accepted in it.

2. Due preparations, by a fresh application of our souls to the efficacy of the blood of Christ, for the purification of our hearts, that we may be meet to draw nigh to God, is at once our incumbent duty and high privilege.

3. In all wherein we have to do with God, we are *principally* to regard those *internal sins* we are conscious of to ourselves, but are hidden from all others.

4. Yet the *universal sanctification* of our whole persons and especially the mortification of outward sins, are also required in our drawing nigh to God. These, and not the gaiety of outward apparel, are the best preparatory ornaments for our religious worship.

5. It is a great mark to draw nigh to God, so as to worship him in spirit and in truth.

§16. 1. There is an internal principle of saving faith required to our profitable profession of the gospel doctrine, without which it will not avail.

2. All that believe ought solemnly to give themselves up to Christ and his rule, in an *express profession* of their faith.

3. Great *difficulties* will sometimes arise in opposition to a sincere profession of the faith.

4. Firmness and *constancy of mind*, with our utmost diligent endeavors, are required to an acceptable continuance in our profession.

5. Uncertainty and *wavering* of mind, as to the truth we profess, or a neglect of the duties wherein it consists, or compliance with errors for fear of persecutions and sufferings, overthrow our profession, and render it useless.

6. As we ought not on *any account* to decline our profession, so to abate of the degrees of *fergency* of spirit therein, is dangerous to our souls.

7. The *faithfulness* of God in his promises is our great encouragement and support against all oppositions.

VERSE 24.

*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works.*

§1. Love and good works the evidences of faith. §2. What implied in provoking one another to love and good works. §3. Observations.

§1. LOVE and good works are the fruits and evidences of the sincere profession of saving faith; wherefore, a *diligent attendance* to them is an effectual means of constancy in our profession.

(Καίτανωμεν ἀλλήλους) "*Let us consider one another.*" The word hath been opened on chap. iii, 1; and denotes in brief, an heedful consideration of mind, a mind *intent* upon a thing in opposition to common, careless, transient thoughts about it. The object here is "one another;" and herein the apostle supposeth—that those to whom he wrote had a *deep concernment* in one another, their present and future state, without which, the mere consideration of one another would only be a fruitless effect of curiosity;—that they had also *communion* together about those things, without which this duty could not be rightly discharged;—and, finally, that they judged themselves obliged to *watch over* one another as to steadfastness in profession, and fruitfulness of love and good works.

On these suppositions, this "*consideration*" respects the *gifts*, the *graces*, the *temptations*, the *dangers*, the *seasons* and opportunities for duty, the *manner* of

walking in church fellowship, and in the world; and is, in reality, the foundation of all these mutual duties,

§2. The branch of duty here specified is (*εις παροξυσμον αγαπης και καλων εργαων*) *to the provocation of love and good works*; that is, as we have rendered the words "to provoke (one another) to love and good works." *Provocation*, though commonly used in an ill sense, is sometimes taken, as here, for an earnest and diligent *excitation* of the minds or spirits of men *to that which is good*; see Rom. ix, 14; as by exhortation, example, or rebukes, until they be as it were warmed for the duty. "Love and good works;" "*love*" is the spring and fountain of all acceptable good works; of mutual love among believers, which is that here intended, as to its nature and causes, and motives to it, I have treated at large chap. vi. The "*good works*" intended are (*καλα*) those which are most *commendable* and praise worthy, such as are most useful to others, and whereby the gospel is most exalted; works proceeding from the shining light of truth, by which God is glorified.

§3. Hence observe,

1. The mutual watch of Christians in the particular societies whereof they are members, is a duty necessary for preserving a consistent profession of the faith.

2. A due consideration of the circumstances, abilities, temptations, and opportunities for duties, in one another, is also required for the same end.

3. Diligent mutual exhortation to gospel duties that we may, on all grounds of reason and example, be provoked to them, is evangelically required of us as a most excellent duty to which in an especial manner we ought to attend.

VERSE 25.

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

§1. (I.) Exposition of the words. §2. The apostle's charge not to forsake Christian assemblies. §3. As the manner of some is. §4. The contrary duty. §5—7. A peculiar motive to it. §8, 9. (II.) Observations.

§1 (I.) **THE** words contain an *enforcement* of the preceding exhortation, in a *caution* against what is contrary to it. (Ἐπισυναγωγὴν αὐτῶν) *the assembling of ourselves together*; it is not the *church state* absolutely, but the *actual assemblies* of believers, walking together in that state, which the apostle intends; for as the church itself is originally the seat of all public divine worship; so the actual assemblies of it are the only way and means for the exercise and performance of it; these *assemblies* were of two sorts;—*stated*, on the first day of the week, 1 Cor. xvi, 2; Acts xx, 7:—*occasional*, as the circumstances of the church required, 1 Cor. v, 4.

The *end* of these assemblies was also twofold;—the due performance of solemn, *stated worship*, in prayer, preaching, singing, and the administration of the sacraments, and—the exercise of *discipline*, or the watch of the church over its members, that their walk and conversation be in all things such as became the gospel; wherefore a voluntary neglect, or a *forsaking* of these assemblies, if persisted in, destroys any church state. Those assemblies were instrumentally the life, the food, the nourishment of their souls; without which they could neither attend to the discipline of Christ, nor yield obedience to his commands, nor make profession of his name as they ought, nor enjoy the bene-

fit of evangelical institutions; whereas in a due observance of them consisted the trial of their faith in the sight of God and man.

§2. The apostle's charge concerning such assemblies is, "that we should not *forsake* them;" there is a twofold forsaking of these assemblies;—that which is *total*, which is the fruit and evidence of absolute apostasy; and—that which is only *partial*, through want of diligence and conscientious care. It is the *latter* that the apostle here intends, as the word in part signifies, and which is usually done on some of these accounts:

1. Fear of *suffering*; this in all ages hath prevailed on many, in times of trial and persecution, to withdraw themselves from those assemblies, and thereby have proved themselves to be the fearful and unbelieving ones, who are in the very first place excluded from the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi, 8; whatever men pretend they believe, if they confess him not *before men*, he will deny them before his Father which is in heaven.

2. *Spiritual sloth*, with the various occasions of this life; if men will not stir up themselves, and shake off the weight that lies upon them, they will fall under a woful neglect as to this and all other important duties; such persons as are influenced by them will make use of many specious pleas which they never fail to plead with men, and there is no contending with them; but let them go to Christ and plead them immediately with him, and then ask themselves, how they suppose they are accepted? This deficiency may, indeed, fall out sometimes where the heart is sincere, but then it will be troubled at it, and watch for the future against the like occasions.

3. *Unbelief* working gradually towards the forsaking of all profession; this is the first way, for the most part, whereby an evil heart of unbelief, in departing

from the living God, doth evidence itself; see chap. iii, 12. I say, hereby usually it first *evidenceth* itself; for it hath unquestionably put forth its power before inwardly, in a neglect of *private* duties; and if such a course from this principle be persisted in, total apostasy lies at the door.

§3. "As the manner of some is;" the church of the Hebrews, especially that at Jerusalem, had been exposed to great trials and persecutions; ver. 32, 33: during this state some of their members, even in those early days, began so far to decline their profession, as not to frequent the assemblies of the church; they were afraid to be taken at a meeting, or that their known persecuting neighbors should take notice of them as they frequented the Christian assemblies.

Again, there were among the Hebrews at that time great disputes about the continuance of the *temple worship*, with which many were entangled, and as that error prevailed in their minds, so did they begin gradually to neglect and forsake the gospel worship; only observe, that it is not an *occasional* dereliction of them, but that which they *accustomed* themselves to; it was their (*εθος*) *manner*, an ordinary way of walking which they accustomed themselves to.

§4. The apostle, in the next place, illustrates this great evil by the contrary duty, (*αλλα παρακαλωντες*) *but exhorting*, all the duties of these assemblies, especially those which are useful to preserve from apostasy, and to prevent backsliding, are proposed under this one head of duty.

The nature of this mutual exhortation among believers in Christian societies hath been considered before, see on chap. iii, 13, and (*ποσσω μαλλον*) *so much the more*. The duties before mentioned are such as ought *always* to be attended to, and yet "the approach



of the day" is a *season* wherein it is our duty to *double* our diligence about them; and there are *warnings* and works of Christ, by his word and providence, the consideration of which ought to excite us to a *peculiar* attendance to them; in proof of this we might appeal to his dealings with the seven churches of *Asia* as types of all others.

§5. "As ye see the day approaching;" (ΤΗΝ ΗΜΕΡΑΝ) *the day* an *eminent day*; the rule whereby we may determine *what* day is intended is this; it was such a day as was a *peculiar motive* to the Hebrews in their present circumstances, to attend diligently to the due performance of gospel duties; it is not such a day, such a motive, as is always *common* to all, but only to those who are in some measure in the like circumstances with them; wherefore, it is neither the day of death personally to them, nor the day of future judgment absolutely that is intended; for those are common to all equally, and at all times, and are a powerful motive in general to the performance of gospel duties; but not a *peculiar motive* at sometimes to peculiar diligence; wherefore, this day was no other but that fearful and *tremendous day*, or *season*, *for the destruction of Jerusalem*, the temple, city, and nation of the Jews, which our Savior had forwarned his disciples of, and which they had in continual expectation.

§6. But it may be said, how should the *approach of this day*, wherein all things were about to be dissolved, the church to be scattered, the whole nation to be consumed with sword and fire, be a motive to *redoubled diligence* in attendance to the duties of Christian assemblies: it should now seem rather to have been a time for every one to shift for himself, and his family, than to leave all to ruin, whilst they looked after these assemblies? We answer,

Whatever desolations and destructions may be approaching, our best and wisest frame will be to trust to God, in the discharge of our *duty*; all other contrivances will prove not only vain, and foolish, but destructive to our souls; they who will in any degree partake of men's sins, must in some degree or other partake of their plagues;—again, It is impossible that men should go through a day of public calamity, a destructive day, comfortably and cheerfully, without a diligent attendance to those known duties of the gospel; for the guilt of this neglect will seize upon them when their trial shall come, and they will wish, when it is too late, that they had acted a different part. Let men pretend what they will, their decay in those duties evidenceth a decay in *all graces*, which they will find weak, and unfit to carry them through their trials; besides, the duties prescribed, rightly discharged, are the great means for strengthening and supporting our souls in that part of the trial which we are to undergo.

§7. How did this day approach? It was approaching, (*in procinctu*) gradually coming upon them, warnings of it, dispositions towards it, intimations of its coming, were given them every day; and these things were so plain, as that the apostle takes it for granted, that they themselves did *see evidently* the approaching day—in the accomplishment of the *signs* of its coming, foretold by our Savior, compare ver. 32—34, with Matt. xxiv, 9, &c. and particularly in that things were at a great stand as to the progress of the *gospel* among the Hebrews. To which we may add, that believers saw it approaching in the various powerful *causes* of it; and especially the body of the people having now refused the gospel, were given up to all wickedness, and hatred to Christ. Moreover, the *time and season*, in the analogy of divine dispensensa-

tions, manifested the same awful truth to them; as *types* of his dealing with the unbelieving Jews, God had warned the old world by Noah, and Sodom by Lot, before the one was destroyed by nature, and the other by fire. Now he would give *them* also their day, and make them a sufficient tender of mercy, which he had now done towards forty years. In this space, through the ministry of the apostles, and other faithful dispensers of the word, the gospel had been proposed to all the Jews throughout the world. Rom. x, 16—20. This being now accomplished, they might *evily* see that the “day was approaching;” besides, at this time all things began to be filled with confusions, disorders, tumults, seditions, and slaughters in the whole nation, as awful presages and introductions of that exemplary day which they were given to expect.

§8. II. From these words and this account we observe,

1. Great diligence is required of us in a due attendance to the assemblies of the church, as instituted by Jesus Christ.

2. The *neglect* of the authority and love of Christ in the appointment of the means of our edification, will always tend to great and ruinous evils.

3. No church order, no outward profession, can secure men from *apostasy*; persons were guilty of it in the first, the best, the purest churches.

4. Perfection, and particular freedom from offence, and ruinous evils, is not to be expected in any church in this world.

5. Men that begin to decline their duty in church relations, ought to be marked, and their ways avoided.

6. Forsaking of church assemblies is usually an entrance into apostasy.

§9. 1. When special warnings do not excite us to

renewed diligence in known duties, our condition is dangerous as to the continuance of the presence of Christ among us.

2. Approaching judgments ought to influence to special diligence in all evangelical duties.

3. If men will shut their eyes against evident signs and tokens of approaching judgments, they will never stir up themselves to the due performance of present duties.

4. In the approach of great and final judgments, God by his word and providence giveth such intimations of their coming, as that *wise men* may discern them; he who is wise, will consider these things, and shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord. The prudent foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; how is it that you discern not the signs of the times?

5. To see evidently such a day approaching, and not to be sedulous and diligent in the duties of divine worship, is a token, of a backsliding frame tending to final apostasy.

#### VERSES 26, 27.

*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

§1. The scope and general import of the words. §2. (I.) More particular exposition. The aggravation of the sin mentioned is, that it cannot be expiated. §3. The dread attending it. §4, 5. Its punishment. §6—8. (II.) Observations.

§1. **IN** these verses the apostle gives a vehement enforcement of his preceding exhortation, from the dreadful consequences of a total neglect of it.

Interpreters have greatly perplexed themselves and others in the interpretation and exposition of these verses, and those that follow. Their conjectures in great variety have proceeded principally from a want

of due attention to the *scope* of the apostle, the *argument* he had in hand, the *circumstances* of the people to whom he wrote, and the then *present state* of God's providence towards them. I shall not trouble the reader with their various conjectures, but evince the mind of the Holy Ghost in them; "If we sin wilfully;" he puts *himself* among them, as his manner is in *comminations*, to shew—that there is no respect of persons in this matter, but that those who have equally sinned shall be equally punished. (Εἰς ἡμᾶς) *wilfully*, say we; that is, obstinately, maliciously; but the word doth not require, nor will scarce bear, that sense; *willingly*, of choice, without surprisal, compulsion, or fear, is all that the world will justly bear. "After we have received the knowledge of the truth;" there is no question but that by "*the truth*" the apostle intends the doctrine of the gospel; and the "*receiving*" of it is, upon conviction of its being *truth*, to take on us the outward profession of it.

Hence it is evident *what sin* is here intended, against which this heavy doom is denounced; a relinquishment and renunciation of the truth of the gospel and its precious promises, with all duties thereunto belonging after we have been convinced of its truth, and avowed its power and excellency; and this *willingly*; not upon a *sudden surprisal* and temptation, as Peter denied Christ—not on those *compulsions and fears* which may work a transient dissimulation, without an internal rejection of the gospel, not through *darkness*, ignorance, making an impression for a season on the minds and reasonings of men; which things, though exceedingly evil and dangerous, may befall them who yet contract not the guilt of this crime; but *by choice*, of their own accord, from the internal pravity of their own minds, and an evil heart of unbelief departing

from the living God; and it is farther implied, that they do it with the preference of another way of religion, and a resting therein, before the gospel; whereas there were *two things* which were the *foundation* of the profession of the gospel; the blood of the covenant, or the blood of the sacrifice of Christ, with the atonement made thereby; and, the dispensation of the Spirit of grace; these they openly renounced, and declared that there was nothing of God in them, see on ver. 29.

§2. The first thing which the apostle chargeth as an aggravation of this sin is, that it cannot be expiated; "there remains no more sacrifice for sin." Words not unlike those of God concerning the house of Eli, 1 Sam. iii, 14. "I have sworn to the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever;" as according to the law, there were certain sins which, from their *nature*, as murder, adultery, blasphemy, or from the *manner* of their commission with obstinacy and an high hand, that had no sacrifice allowed for them, but those that were guilty of them were to be cut off from the people of God, and to "die without mercy," ver. 28; so is it with them that thus sin *willingly*, under the gospel; there is no relief appointed for them, no means for the expiation of their sin; and there is an especial reason of this severity under the gospel, which the apostle hath a principal respect to, *viz.* that there is now no *repetition* of sacrifices for sin. That of Christ our High Priest was *offered once* for all, henceforth he dieth no more, he is offered no more, nor can there be any other sacrifice offered for ever; (ὅτι ἐλὶ ἀπολείπειται) *there remains not*, there is not in the counsel. purpose, or institution of God any other (θυσία) *sacrifice*. whereby sin might be expiated, yet left to be offered in this or any other case.

§3. "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment," when a man under the law had contracted the guilt of any sin, as was indispensably capital in its punishment, for the legal expiation of which no sacrifice was appointed or allowed; as murder, adultery, blasphemy, &c. he had nothing remaining but a *fearful expectation* of the execution of the legal entrance against him; and it is evident that in this context the apostle argues from the less to the greater; if it was so, that this was the case of him who so sinned against the law of Moses, how much more must it be so with them who sin against the *gospel*; whose sin is incomparably greater and the punishment more severe?

There are two things in these words;—the *punishment* due to the sins of apostates, "judgment," fiery indignation, which devours the adversary; and—the *certain approach* of this judgment, "there remains a fearful expectation;" (Φοβερά δε τις εκδοχή) a *kind of fearful expectation*; nor is this spoken by way of *diminution*, but to intimate something that is *inexpressible*, such as no heart can conceive or tongue express; 1. Pet. iv, 17, 18. "What shall be the end of them who obey not the gospel? Where shall the sinners and ungodly appear?" (Εκδοχή) *expectation*, is that frame of mind, with respect to any thing future, good or bad, wherein we are concerned; and is here said to be (Φοβερά) *fearful*, tremendous, that which men can neither conflict with, nor avoid; it fills the mind with dread and horror, depriving it of all comfort and relief; if they did set themselves to consider the event of their apostasy, nothing else could befall their minds. I am persuaded it is probable, that God very seldom lets them pass without tormenting fear, and a dread of approaching judgment, in this world, which is a broad entrance into hell; (κρισις) *judgment*,

a just and righteous sentence denouncing punishment proportionate to their sins and crimes, and *punishment itself* which ensues thereon, as immediately described; and although respect be had herein *principally* to the judgment of the great day; yet it is not exclusive of any judgments that are *preparatory* to it, and pledges of it; as that which was then impending over the apostate Hebrew church.

§4. The *punishment* and destruction of those sinners is (πυρος ζηλος) *a fiery indignation*; which words do not relate to (εκδοχη) *expectation*, as (κρισις) *judgment* doth; it is not the *expectation of fiery indignation*, but they refer immediately to (απολειπέται) *there remaineth*; as there remains an *expectation of judgment*, so there remains *a fiery indignation*; and so afterwards (μελλοντος) *which shall*, refers to (πυρος) *fire*, and not to (ζηλος) *indignation*; this indignation, or *fervor of fire*, hath respect to three things;—The holiness of God's nature, from whence originally this judgment proceeds;—the righteous act of the will of God; sometimes called his wrath and anger from the effects of it; and—the dreadful *severity* of the judgment in itself, its nature and effects, as in the next words: I doubt not but respect is had to the *final* judgment, and the *eternal* destruction of apostates; but yet also it evidently includeth that sore and *fiery* judgment which God was bringing upon the obstinate and apostate Jews, in the total destruction of them and their church state by fire and sword; which, (as the event proves) might well be called a *fiery indignation*, or *fervor of fire*; see Matt. xxiv, 29—31; 2 Pet. iii, 10—12, “fire that shall devour, or eat up the adversaries;” the expression is taken from Isaiah xxvi, 11, for “the fire of thine enemies,” is that wherewith they shall be burned.



§5. (Μελλοντες) "*it shall devour*," it is (*in procinctu*) *in readiness* to come; though future, it is ready to make its entrance, and whatever appearances there are of its turning aside, and men's avoiding it, it will come in its proper season; Heb. ii, 3, the *foundation* of it is the irreversible decree of God, accompanied with righteousness and the measure which infinite wisdom gave to his patience. This was the unavoidable season that was approaching, when the adversaries had filled up the measure of their sin, and God's providence had saved the elect. (Τες υπεναντιος) *the adversaries*; he doth not say those that *believe not*, and *obey not* the gospel, as elsewhere when he treats absolutely of the day of judgment, 2 Thes. i, 8, 9; but intends those who, from a contrary principle, set themselves against the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel; and which is a peculiar description of the unbelieving Jews at that time; they did not only refuse the gospel through unbelief, but were acted by a principle of *opposition* to it, not only as to themselves, but as to *others*; 1 Thes. ii, 15, 16, "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are *contrary unto all men*, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway, for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost;" see also Acts xiii, 45; xxii, 22, 23.

What is the *effect* of this fiery indignation against those adversaries? It shall (εσθιειν) *eat them up*; fire eats, and as it were, devours, swallows up all combustible matter to which it is applied; it shall "*devour*" them as to all happiness, all blessedness, all hopes, comforts, and reliefs, but not their being; on their *being* this fire shall eternally prey, and shall never utterly consume it. And if we apply it to their *temporal*

destruction, the similitude holds throughout, for it utterly consumed and devoured them.

§6. (II.) Let us now proceed to observe,

1. If a voluntary relinquishment of the profession and duties of the gospel be the highest sin, and be attended with the height of wrath and punishment, we ought earnestly to watch against every thing that inclineth or disposeth us thereunto.

2. Every *declension* from the profession of the gospel hath a proportion of the *guilt* of this great sin, according to the proportion it bears to the sin itself; of which there may be various degrees.

3. There are sins and seasons wherein God absolutely refuses to hear any more from men in order to their salvation.

4. The loss of an interest in the sacrifice of Christ, on whatever account it fall out, is absolutely ruinous to the souls of men.

§7. 1. There is an inseparable connexion between apostasy and eternal ruin.

2. God oftentimes visits the minds of cursed apostates with dreadful expectations of approaching wrath.

3. When men have hardened themselves in sin, no fear of punishment will stir them up to seek after relief.

4. A dreadful expectation of future wrath, without hope of relief, is an open entrance into hell itself.

5. The expectation of future judgment in guilty persons will be at one time or another dreadful and tremendous.

§8. 1. There is a determinate time for the accomplishment of all divine threatenings, and the inflictions of the severest judgments, which no man can avoid or abide. "He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world." So at present there is a sort of men, whose damnation sleepeth not, concerning whom

he hath sworn that time shall be no more, which is the present state of the *antichristian* world.

2. The certain determination of divine vengeance on the enemies of the gospel is a motive to holiness, a support under sufferings, in them that believe. Lift up your heads, know your salvation is near at hand; what manner of persons ought we to be? See 2 Thess. i, 7—10.

3. The highest aggravation of the greatest sins is, when men out of a contrary principle of superstition and error, set themselves maliciously to oppose the doctrine and truth of the gospel, with respect to themselves and others.

4. There is a time when God will make demonstrations of his wrath and displeasure against all such adversaries of the gospel, as shall be pledges of his eternal indignation.

5. The dread and terror of God's final judgment against the enemies of the gospel is in itself inconceivable, and *only shadowed* out by things of the greatest dread and terror in the world.

#### VERSES 28, 29.

*He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.*

§1 (I.) Exposition. The design of the passage. §2. Punishment by the law. §3. Greater punishment of sins against the gospel, §4. Being against the person of Christ. §5. His priestly office. §6. And his spirit. §7. The consequent severity of the punishment. §8, 9. (II.) Observations.

§1. (I.) **T**O convince the Hebrews not only of the *certainty* and *severity* of the judgment declared, but also of the *equity* and *righteousness* of it, he proposeth unto them the consideration of God's constitution of

punishment with respect to the law of Moses, which they could not deny to be just and equal. "He that despised Moses's law;" that is, by such a sin as the law deemed capital, as murder, adultery, incest, idolatry, blasphemy, and some others, being committed with an high hand or presumptuously, Exod. xxi, 14; Numb. xv, 30, 31; Deut. xvii, 12. He who was thus guilty is said (*αθετειν*) to despise Moses's law, to abolish it, as the word signifies.

§2. The punishment was, "he died without mercy;" he died; he was put to death (not always, it may be, *de facto*, but) such was the constitution of the law, that he was to be put to death without mercy. There were several ways of inflicting capital punishments appointed by the law, as hanging on a tree, burning and stoning: and it is said, that he died (*χωρις οικτιρημον*) without mercy, not only because there was no allowance for any such mercy as should save and deliver him, but God had expressly forbidden that either mercy or compassion should be shewed in such cases, Deut. xiii, 6—9; xix, 33. The execution of this judgment was not to be done except (*επι δυοιν η τρισι μαρτυροιν*) under two or three witnesses of the fact and crime; for the law in that case was very express: Deut. xvii, 6; xix, 13; Numb. xxxv, 30. Although God was very severe in the prescription of these judgments, yet he would give no advantage thereby to wicked and malicious persons to take away the lives of innocent men; and such abhorrency God had of false witnesses in criminal causes, as he established a *lex talionis* in this cause alone, that a false witness should suffer the utmost of what he thought and contrived to bring on another. The equity of which is still in force, as suitable to the law of nature, and ought to be more observed than what it is: Deut. xix, 16—21.

§3. On this account of sin and punishment under the law, the apostle makes his inference to the certainty and equity of the punishment he had declared with respect to sins against the gospel, ver. 29, "Of how much sorer punishment, &c." The first aggravation of the sin intended is from the object of it, *the person of Christ*, the Son of God; which contains a divine constellation of all the blessed effects of infinite wisdom, goodness, and grace. In them we have the most glorious manifestations of these perfections. But how comes the Son of God to be concerned in this matter? What injury is done him by apostates from the gospel? I answer, that as the Lord Christ in his own person was the special *author* of the gospel; as his *authority* is the special object of our faith in it; as his *office*, with all the fruits of it, is the subject, sum, and substance of the gospel—so there is no reception of it in a due manner to salvation, no rejection of it to final condemnation, but what is all originally, fundamentally, and virtually contained in the reception or rejection of *the person of Christ*. This is the life, the soul, and foundation of all gospel truth; without which it is of no power or efficacy to the souls of men. I cannot but observe, that, as whosoever rejects the gospel, rejecteth and forsaketh the person of Christ; so, on whatever account men take up the profession and perform the duties of it, if the foundation be not laid in a reception of *Christ himself*, all their professions will be in vain.

§4. But it may be thought, if the *person of Christ* be concerned herein, yet it is *indirectly*, or consequentially only, and in some *small* degree; no, saith the apostle, but he that is guilty of this sin doth (*καταπατεῖ*) *trample on the Son of God*, or *tread him under foot*, which is the highest expression of scorn, con-

tempt, and malice; conveying also the idea of insulting over, as is plain in the metaphor. Christ proposed in the gospel, was professed by these persons for a while to be the *Son of God*, the *true Messiah*, the Savior of the world; him whom God had exalted above principalities and powers, and whom therefore we all ought to exalt and adore in our souls: but now by this sort of persons, he was esteemed an evil doer, a seducer, one not at all sent of God, but one that justly suffered for his crimes; herein they *trod under foot* the Son of God with all contempt and scorn. Again; the profession they made was, to observe and do all that he had *commanded* them, because all power was given him in heaven and earth; this they now utterly rejected and despised, betaking themselves to other modes of divine service in opposition to them.

§5. Another aggravation of the sin spoken of is its opposition to the *priestly office* and sacrifice of Christ, here called (το αιμα της διαθηκης) *the blood of the covenant*. This was not only the great *expression* of the grace of God, and of the love of Christ, but also to sinners, the *cause* of all good, the centre of divine wisdom in all the *mediatory* actings of Christ, the life and soul of the gospel. (Κοινον) *common*, as opposed to any thing that is *consecrated* to God, and thereby made sacred: hence it is used for *profane* and unholy, as not belonging to divine worship. They no longer esteemed it as that blood wherewith the new covenant was *sealed*, confirmed, and established, but as the blood of an *ordinary man* shed for his crimes, which is not sacred, but *common* and unholy; nay, in their estimation, not of so much use to the glory of God as the blood of beasts in legal sacrifices, which is the height of impiety. Those by whom the efficacy of his blood for the expiation of sin, by making sat-

isfaction and atonement, is denied, will never be able to free themselves from making it in some sense a *common thing*; yea, the contempt which has been cast on the blood of Christ by that sort of men, will not be expiated with any other sacrifice for ever. But as *Christ is precious* to them who believe, 1 Pet. i, 19, so is his *blood* also, wherewith they are redeemed. (Εν ᾧ ἡγιασθε) *wherewith he was sanctified*; it is not real or internal sanctification that is here intended, but a *separation* and *dedication* to God, in which sense the word is often used, and all the disputes concerning the total and final apostasy from faith and real satisfaction, from this place are altogether vain. The chief difficulty of this text is, *concerning whom* these words are spoken? The design of the apostle in the context leads plainly to *Christ himself*, who was *dedicated* to God, to be an eternal High Priest, by the blood of the covenant. This these daring apostates esteemed an unholy thing, such as would have no effect to consecrate him unto God and his mediatorial office.

§6. A farther aggravation of this sin is taken from its opposition to the *spirit* of Christ; (καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος ἐνυβρίσας) *and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace*. There are two parts of this aggravation; the first, taken from the object of their sins, *the Spirit of grace*; the second, taken from the *manner* of their opposition to him, they *do him despise*. This divine person, the Holy Spirit, who is God himself, and his communication of grace and mercy, was HE whom these apostates renounced under this peculiar notion or consideration, that he was peculiarly sent, given, and bestowed, to *bear witness* to the person, doctrine, death, and sacrifice of Christ, with the consequent glory, John xvi, 4; 1 Pet. i, 12. But now being wholly

fallen off from Christ and the gospel, they openly declared, that there was *no testimony* in them to the truth, but that all these things were either diabolical delusions or fanatical misapprehensions. Now this proceeding from them who had once themselves made the same profession with others of their truth and reality, gave the *deepest wound* that could be given to the gospel; for all the adversaries of it who had been silenced with the public miraculous testimonies of the Holy Spirit, now strengthened themselves by the confession of these apostates, that there was nothing in it but pretence; and who should better know than those who had been of that society? Hence are they said to "*do despite to the Spirit of grace*:" they *injure* him as far as they are able. The word includes *wrong with contempt*. And what greater *despite* could be done to him, than to question his truth and the veracity of his testimony? And if lying to the Holy Ghost is so great a sin, what is it to make the Holy Ghost a *liar*?

§7. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye?" which includes that such a sinner shall be *punished*, that this shall be a *sore punishment*, a *far greater punishment*, that what was inflicted according to the law, such as men shall be able neither to abide nor to avoid. "Of *how much* sorer?" None can declare, none can conceive it, 1 Pet. iv, 17, 18. But whereas that punishment was *death without mercy*, wherein could this exceed it? I answer, because that was a *temporal* death only; for though such sinners under the law might perish eternally, yet that was not by virtue of the constitution of the Mosaic law, which reached only to temporal punishments; but *this punishment is eternal*. See 2 Thes. i, 6—8; Mark xvi, 16. The way whereby they are made obnoxious to it is, that they are (*αξιωθεῖσθαι*) *counted worthy* of it; they shall receive



neither more nor less than their due: the judge in this case is God himself, as the apostle declares in the next verse; he alone knows, he alone can justly determine what such apostates are *worthy* of; but, in general, that this shall unspeakably exceed that annexed to the transgression of the law, is left to *themselves* to judge, "suppose ye." What do ye think in your own hearts will be the judgment of God concerning these sinners? This argument the apostle frequently insists upon, (as chap. ii, 2—4, and xii, 25,) and it had a peculiar cogency towards the Hebrews, who had lived under the terror of those legal punishments all their days.

§8. (II.) From the whole we proceed to observe,

1. The contempt of God and his authority in his law, is the gall and poison of sin.

2. When the God of mercies will have *men* shew no mercy, as in temporal punishments; he can and will, upon repentance, shew mercy as to eternal punishment; for we dare not condemn all into hell when the law condemned as to temporal punishment.

3. Though there may be sometimes an appearance of great severity in God's judgments against sinners, yet when the nature of their sins and their aggravation shall be discovered, they will be manifest to have been righteous and within due measures.

4. Let us take heed of every neglect of the person of Christ, and his authority, lest we enter into some degree or other of the guilt of this great offence.

5. The sins of men can *really* and actually reach neither the person nor authority of Christ; they only do that in *desire*, which in effect they cannot accomplish. This doth not extenuate their sin; the guilt of it is no less than if they did actually trample upon the Son of God.

6. Every thing that takes off from an high and

glorious esteem of the blood of Christ, as the blood of the covenant, is a dangerous entrance into apostasy.

7. There are no such cursed pernicious enemies to religion as apostates.

§9. 1. The inevitable certainty of the eternal punishment of gospel despisers depends on the essential holiness and righteousness of God, as the ruler and judge of all; it is nothing but what he in his just judgment, which is according to truth, accounteth them *worthy* of, Rom. i. 32.

2. It is a righteous thing with God to deal thus with men; wherefore all hopes of mercy, or the least relaxation of punishment to all eternity, are vain as to apostates; they shall have judgment without mercy.

3. God hath allotted different degrees of punishment to the different degrees and aggravations of sin.

4. The apostasy from the gospel here described, being the absolute height of all sin and impiety that the nature of man is capable of, renders them eternally obnoxious to punishment, and the greatest sin must have the greatest judgment.

5. It is our duty diligently to inquire into the nature of sin, lest we be overtaken in the great offence.

6. Sinning against the testimony given by the Holy Ghost to the truth and power of the gospel, of which men have had experience, is the most dangerous symptom of a perishing condition.

7. Threatenings of future eternal judgments on gospel despisers belong to the preaching of the gospel.

8. The equity and righteousness of the most severe judgments of God against gospel despisers is so *evident*, that it may be referred to the judgment of men themselves if not totally obstinate in their blindness.

9. It is our duty to justify God and to bear him witness with respect to the righteousness of his judgments against gospel despisers.

## VERSES 30, 31.

*For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.*

§1. (1.) Exposition. The severity before mentioned supported by sacred testimony. §2. Vengeance belongs to God. 3. God the supreme judge. §4. Hence the awful danger of falling under his displeasure. §5, 6. (II.) Observations.

§1. **A**s if the apostle had said, in the severe sentence we have denounced against apostates, we have spoken nothing but what is suitable to the holiness of God, and what indeed in such cases he hath declared he will do. The conjunction (*γὰρ*) *for*, denotes the introduction of a reason of what was spoken before, but more particularly the reference he had made to their own judgments of what sore punishment was due to apostates; if you would be fully convinced of the righteousness and certainty of this dreadful destruction of apostates, consider, in the first place, the author of it, the *only judge* in the case; "we know him that hath said," what God speaks Deut. xxxii, 35, 36. concerning *his enemies*, and the enemies of his people in covenant with him is applicable to that *people itself*, when they absolutely break and reject the covenant; *for these*, upon their apostasy come into the place of the most cursed enemies of God and his faithful people; and therefore God will be to them, what he was to the worst of his adversaries; for shall he not act in the like manner towards them who murdered the Lord Jesus, and persecuted all his followers?

§2. This *first testimony* in the original is (לְמִי־נִקְמָה) *to me vengeance and recompence*, which the apostle renders by (ενδικος μισθαποδοσια) *a just recompence*, to the same purpose. *Recompence* is the actual exercise

of vengeance; (δίκη, ἐκδίκησις) *vengeance* is the actual execution of judgment on sinners, according to their desert, without mitigation of mercy; it is an act of *judgment*, and wherever mention is made of it, God is still proposed as a *judge*; it being a *just retribution* according to the just demerit of sin. This vengeance God appropriateth to himself in a peculiar manner, as that which in its full latitude, no creature hath any interest in; see Psal. xciv, 1, 2; for it respects only *sin in its own formal nature*, as an offence against God; although he hath in magistrates allowed the infliction of punishments on offenders to answer the proper ends of government and to promote the peace of the world; yet as to *vengeance*, as it denotes giving satisfaction to ourselves in the punishment of others, it is forbidden to all persons both public and private. God in *executing vengeance* gives satisfaction to his own infinite *holiness* and *righteousness*, which makes it holy and just; wherefore the *formal reason* of the appropriation of all vengeance unto God, is, that he alone can judge and punish in his own case, and to his own satisfaction. "He hath made all things for himself, and the wicked for the day of evil;" in this appropriation of vengeance unto God there is supposed and included, that indeed *there is vengeance* with him, which in due time he will execute; "I will repay saith God;" He doth oftentimes exercise great patience and forbearance, even then when vengeance might justly be expected; "how long dost thou not *avenge* our blood?" This commonly adds to the *security* of wicked men, and they learn to despise the threatenings of all the divine judgments which they have deserved, 2 Pet. iii, 3—7; Eccles. viii, 11; they are ready to conclude, that either *vengeance* doth not *belong* to God, or that it shall be *executed* when and where they are not concerned; but

a determined time is fixed for the execution of deserved vengeance; hence he calls it "the year of vengeance, and the day of recompence;" so here, "I will recompence, saith the Lord."

§3. The *second testimony*, taken from the same place, is of the same import with this; "The Lord shall judge his people." In Deuteronomy, chap. xxxii, 36; it is applied to such a judgment of them as tends to their deliverance; but the *general truth* of the words is, that God is the *supreme judge*, he is judge himself; Psal. i, 6; this the apostle makes use of, concluding that the righteousness of God, as the supreme judge of all, obligeth him to this severe destruction of apostates; for "shall not the judge of all the world do right?" Shall not he who is judge, in a peculiar manner, of those that profess themselves to be his people. punish them for their iniquities, especially such as break off all covenant relation.

§4. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." These words are both an *inference* from those immediately foregoing and a *recapitulation* of all he had spoken to this purpose. Let men look to it, let them look to themselves, and consider what they do; "for it is a fearful thing." &c. In what sense God is called the "*living God*," and with respect to what ends, hath been declared before, chap. iii, 12; and ix, 14. In brief, this title is ascribed to God in *opposition* to all dead and dumb *idols*, and with respect to his *eternal power*, whereby he is able to avenge the sins of men; indeed it calls to mind all the other holy properties of his nature, which are suited to impress dread and terror on presumptuous sinners, whose punishment is thence demonstrated to be unavoidable; the event of sinning is (ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς χεῖρας) to *fall into his hands*; which is a common expression with reference

to the power of any one over his enemies; none can be said to "fall into the hands of God," as if they were not before in his power; therefore it denotes to be obnoxious to his power and judgment when there is nothing in God himself, nothing in his word, nothing in the law, nothing in the gospel, that can be pleaded for the least abatement of punishment. There is no property of God that can be implored; it is the destruction of the sinner alone, whereby they will all be glorified; (*Φοβερον*) a fearful, dreadful thing, that which no heart can conceive, nor tongue express; men are apt to put off all thoughts of it, or to have slight thoughts about it; but in itself how dreadful, terrible, and eternally destructive of all their happiness, and inflictive of all the evil that our nature is capable of! This therefore is a passage of holy writ much to be considered, especially in *these days*, wherein men grow cold and careless in their profession, and are signalized by awful marks of declension.

§5. (II.) We may here observe,

1. There can be no right judgment made of the nature and demerit of sin, without a due consideration of the nature and holiness of HIM against whom it is committed; nothing, therefore will state our thoughts aright concerning the guilt and demerit of sin, but a deep consideration of the infinite greatness, holiness, righteousness, and power of God. To which we may add, that God acts not as to the *effects* of these properties of his nature, but on a preceding contempt of his bounty, grace, and mercy, as it is impossible that sin should come into the world but by the contempt of these things; for, antecedently to all possibility of sinning, God communicates the effects of his *goodness and bounty* to the creation, and, in the reference to those sins which are against the gospel, the effect of his *grace*.

*and mercy*; this is that which will give us a due measure of the guilt and demerit of sin; look upon it as a *contempt of* infinite goodness, bounty, grace, and mercy, and as rising up against infinite greatness, holiness, righteousness, and power, and we shall view it as it is.

2. Under the apprehensions of the great severities of divine judgments, the consideration of God, the author of them, will both relieve our faith and quiet our hearts. We shall need nothing else to give the most full satisfaction to our souls, than to consider him who hath said, "vengeance is mine, I will repay it."

3. A due consideration of the nature of God, and that he is judge of all, especially of his people, and that enclosure he hath made of vengeance to himself, under an irrevocable purpose for its execution, gives indubitable assurance of the certain unavoidable destruction of all wilful apostates; all their security, all their presumptuous hopes will vanish before this consideration, as darkness before the rising sun.

4. Although those who are the peculiar people of God stand in many relations to him that are full of refreshment and comfort, yet let them constantly remember that he is the holy and *righteous judge*, even towards his own people.

5. The knowledge of God in some good measure, both as to what he is in himself, and what he hath taken on himself to do, is necessary to render either his promises or threatenings effectual to the minds of men.

§6. 1. There is an *apprehension* of the terror of the Lord in the final judgment, which is of great use to the souls of men, 2 Cor. v, 11; at least to them who are not yet irrevocably engaged in the tremendous effect of it.

2. When there is nothing left but the expectation of

judgment, its fore-apprehension will be filled with dread and terror. "It is a fearful thing."

3. The dread of the final judgment where there shall be no mixture of ease, is altogether inexpressible.

4. *That man* is lost for ever who hath nothing in God that he can appeal to; nothing in the law or gospel which he can plead for himself; and this is the state of all wilful apostates.

5. Those properties of God which are the principal *delight* of believers, the chief object of their faith, hope, and trust, are an eternal spring of dread and *terror* to all impenitent sinners; "the living God."

6. The glory and honor of the future state of blessedness and of misery are inconceivable, either to believers or to sinners.

7. The fear and dread of God, in the description of his wrath, ought continually to be on the hearts of all who profess the gospel.

## VERSES 32—34.

*But to call to remembrance the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used; for ye had compassion on me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods; knowing in yourselves, that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*

§1. (I.) Exposition: general design and import of the words. §2. The former days, what. Their being illuminated, what. §3. Their fight of afflictions. 4. Reproaches. §5. Made a gazing-stock. §6. Became voluntary companions of sufferers. §7, 8. Their sympathy with Paul. §9. Their encouragement for so doing. §10, 11, (II.) Observations.

§1. (I.) **T**HE words in their coherence, intimated in the adversative (δε) *but*, have respect to the exhortation laid down, ver. 25. All the verses interposed contain dehoration from the evil which they are warned of. (Αναμνησκειν) *call to mind*; it is not a



bare remembrance, but a calling to mind, so as to consider what *support* they had under their sufferings, what *satisfaction* in them, what *deliverance* from them, that they might not despond upon the approach of the like evils; for if we thus *call to mind* what was the *cause* for which we suffered, the *honor* of our sufferings out-balancing all the contempt and reproaches of the world; the *presence* of God enjoyed in them; and the reward proposed to us;—our minds will be greatly strengthened.

§2. (Τὰς προτέρων ημερᾶς) *the former days*; it is uncertain what *days* or seasons the apostle peculiarly intends; besides those *continual hazards* they were in from their adversaries, and the *occasional sufferings* they were exposed to, they seem to have had some *special season of persecution* before the writing of this epistle; the *first* was in the stoning of Stephen; when great persecution arose against all the church, and extended itself to all the churches of Christ in that nation, wherein our apostle himself was highly concerned, Acts viii, 1; ix, 1; xxii, 19, and xxvi, 10, 11. And there was *another* on occasion of this holy apostle himself; for upon his last coming to Jerusalem, after his great successes in preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, the whole body of the people was filled with rage and madness against him and all the other disciples. (Ἐν αὐτῇ φωτισθέντες) *in which ye were enlightened*, or rather, “in which having been enlightened.” The mention of this their illumination, being in the *time past*, manifests that their enlightening preceded those days of their sufferings; the one following, as it were, immediately on the other. This *enlightening* was that work of God’s grace whereby they were, 1 Pet. ii, 9, “called out of darkness into his marvellous light;” the “light of the knowledge of God shining

into their hearts." This spiritual change was presently followed with days of affliction, trouble, and persecution. In itself it is, for the most part, accompanied with joy, delight, real and vigorous actings of faith and love, 1. Pet. i, 8. Hence, frequent mention is made of the first love of persons and churches. And it is usual with God thus to deal with his people in all ages; he no sooner calls them to himself, but he "leads them into the *wilderness*;" he no sooner plants them, but he shakes them with storms, that they may be more firmly rooted. And this he doth—to take off their *expectation* from this world; to try their *faith*; 1 Pet. v, 6, 7; for the *glory* and *propagation* of the gospel; for the *exercise* of all graces; to breed us up for the *military discipline* of Christ, who is the captain of our salvation. They who pass through their first trials, are Christ's veterans for new attempts.

§3. "Ye endured a great fight of *afflictions*;" we render the original word (παθημάτων) *afflictions*, although, by the particulars afterwards mentioned, it appears the apostle intended only *persecutions* from men; but the word (παθηματα) is properly *sufferings*; the same that the apostle useth to express the sufferings of Christ, chap. ii, 10, and v, 8. It is a general name for every thing that is hard and *afflictive* to our nature, from whatever cause it arises; and therefore all the evils, troubles, hardships, and distresses that may befall men on account of their profession; this is what we are called to, and of which we are not to think strange. He calls us indeed to "his *eternal glory*;" but we must *suffer* with him, if we expect to *reign* with him. Of these afflictions and persecutions they had (πολλην ἀθλησιν) a *great fight*; a great labor and contention of spirit. The *allusion* is taken from their wrestling and fighting in the *athletic* (commonly

called the *Olympic*) games, who contended publicly for victory, with the glory and honor attending it. Now there were no occasions of life wherein men so voluntarily engaged themselves in difficulties and dangers, as in those games and strivings for mastery; in like manner, no man is *compelled* to enter into the gospel combat, but they must make it an act of their *own choice*, but, in order to obtain it, they must undergo a *great strife*, contention, and dangerous conflict. (*Τρεμενναι*) *ye endured*, and bore patiently, so as not to faint or despond, or turn away from your profession; ye came off conquerors, having failed in no point of your conflict. This the apostle would have them "call to remembrance," that they might be strengthened and encouraged for future engagements.

§4. "Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both "by reproaches and afflictions;" their sufferings consisted of reproaches and *afflictions*; and as to the *manner* of suffering, they were made a *gazing-stock*. (*Ονειδισμοις*) *reproaches*, are a great aggravation of sufferings to ingenuous minds. The psalmist, in the person of Christ himself, complains, that "reproaches had broken his heart," Psal. lxxix, 20. There are *two branches* of reproaches; *false accusations*, or charging men with vile and contemptible things, such as will expose them to public scorn and rage; and the contempt that is cast upon what is true, good, and praise worthy; they reproach them with their faith in Christ, their worship of him, and their owning his authority; this *in itself* was their honor and their crown; but as it was managed with hatred and blasphemy, as it was confirmed by the common consent of all, as it received strength and countenance from their suffering, wherein they were esteemed punished for their sins and impieties, it greatly added to their distress.

§5. The manner of their suffering these things was, (*θεαριζόμενοι*) *they were made a gazing-stock*; they were brought, as it were, on the public stage, or theatre, and there exposed to all sorts of evils; for when guilty persons were cast to beasts to be devoured, it was in the theatre, where they were made a spectacle, or a gazing-stock to the people. But the apostle limits the sufferings of the Hebrews to *reproaches* and *afflictions*; they had not “yet resisted unto blood;” so at Ephesus they drew Gaius and Aristarchus into the *theatre*, and were there publicly exposed with an intention to destroy them, Acts xix, 29; so when men and women were driven or dragged out of their meetings into the streets, or committed to prisons, Acts viii, 3; then were they loaded with all manner of reproaches, and made a *gazing-stock* to all about them; but their *cause* and their divine *example* were sufficient to support them on these occasions however trying.

§6. The other part of their sufferings was, that they “became the *companions* of them that were so used;” they came into a *fellowship* of sufferings with them that (*σὺν ἀναγριζομένοις*) *were so used*, that had their *way* and *course* of conversion in the world, *in that manner*.

I am rather inclined to regard a double distribution of *things* and *persons* in the text; that of *things* (*τὰ τοιαῦτα*) *partly*, in actual *suffering*, and a *participation* of the suffering of others; that of *persons* (*οἱ δὲ*) *and partly*, in that only *some* of those to whom he wrote did actually in their own persons suffer the things of which he speaks, and the rest of them were only *companions* with them that suffered; and so it generally falls out in the fiercest persecutions; all are not called forth to the *same actual* sufferings; some in the order of Providence, and through the rage of men, are

singled out for trials; and some escape, at least for a season, and it may be are reserved for the same trials at another time; so it may be said of the *whole church*, that they endured a great fight of afflictions, while *some* of them were a *gazing-stock*, &c. and others of them were companions of them who were so used.

(Κοινωνοὶ γεννηθέντες) *Whilst ye became companions*; by their *common interest* in the same cause for which they suffered,—by their *apprehension* that the same sufferings would reach to themselves, seeing there was the same cause in them as in others; by their *sorrow*, *trouble*, and *compassion* for the suffering of the members of the same body and exalted head; by all duties of *love* and *afflictions* which they discharged in owning and visiting of them; by the *communication of their goods*, and outward enjoyments to them, who had suffered the loss of their own; so were they made their “companions.”

§7. “For ye had compassion of me in my bonds.” This he affirms as a *proof* of what he had spoken before; (καὶ γὰρ) *for even ye had compassion on me*. I have proved before that the apostle Paul was the author of this epistle, and this very passage is a strong confirmation of it; for who else could there be, whose *bonds* for the gospel were so known among the believing Jews, as his own? Hence he styles himself in particular, Philem. i, the *prisoner*, the *bond-man* of Christ, and he gloried in his bonds as his peculiar honor, Acts xxvi, 29; Ephes. vi, 20; Phil. i, 7. and 12—16; Col. iv, 18; 2 Tim. ii, 9. It is unreasonable to suppose that any other is intended. *Note*, of what kind our sufferings shall be, is at the sovereign disposal of God; wherefore let every one of us be content and rejoice in what way soever God shall be pleased to call us to suffer for the truth of the gospel, and the glory of his name.

§8. (Ζυνεπαθήσατε) *ye had compassion*; they *suffered together* with him therein; they were not unconcerned in his sufferings, as being satisfied with their own freedom, as is the manner of some; no, it is not a heartless, fruitless, *ineffectual piety* that the apostle intends, but such a frame of mind as hath a real concern in the sufferings of others, and is operative in suitable duties towards their good.

He next minds them of their *deportment* under their *own* sufferings; “and *took joyfully* the spoiling of your goods.” (Τραπχομένων) their *outward substance*, and pre-enjoyments; it is especially applied to things of present use, as the goods of a man’s house, his money, corn or cattle, which are more subject to rapine and spoil, than other real possessions, lands, or inheritances.

The way whereby they were deprived of their goods was by (απαγωγήν) *rapine* and *spoil*, to satisfy their rage and malice, in the ruin of the saints of Christ.

The frame of mind in the Hebrews, as to this part of their suffering, is, that they took their losses and spoils (μετὰ χαρᾶς) *with joy*. Nothing usually more affects the minds of men than the sudden spoiling of their goods, what they have *labored* for; what they have *use* for, what they have *provided* for themselves and their families. But these Hebrews received this rapine, not only patiently and cheerfully, but with a certain *peculiar joy*.

§9. “Knowing in yourselves, that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance. Some Greek copies, and ancient translations, read the words; (γινώσκοντες ἐν οὐρανοῖς) “*knowing that ye have in heaven;*” and not (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς) *in yourselves*. I shall therefore open the words according to both readings.

1. “Knowing that ye *have in yourselves;*” the things which they had lost were their *goods*, their

"substance" as they are called Luke xv, 13. To these he opposeth the *substance in themselves*, which none could spoil them of. Such is the peace and joy our Lord Jesus Christ gives to his church here below, John xvi, 22. chap. xiv, 27. And if the "*substance*" here intended be that which was *in themselves*, in opposition to those *external* goods which they were deprived of, then it is that experimental *subsistence* in the souls of believers, which faith gives to the grace and love of God in Christ Jesus; in this sense (*γινωσκοντες*) *knowing*, expresseth an *assurance* arising from experience, the powerful experience, which faith gave them of it; see Rom. v, 1—5; and this substance is (*κρείονα*) *better*, incomparably more excellent, than the outward goods that are subject to spoil; and it is (*μενεσαν*) *abiding*, that which will not leave them in whom it is, nor can never be taken from them; "my joy shall no man take from you."

2. If we follow the ordinary reading, this *substance* is said to be *in heaven*; there prepared, there laid up, there to be enjoyed; wherefore, it compriseth the whole of the future state of blessedness; and it is well called "*substance*," being all riches, an inheritance, a weight of glory; for, in comparison of it, all temporary things have *no substance* in them.

Again, they are said (*εχειν*) *to have* this substance not in present possession, but in right, title, and evidence; they knew in themselves that they had an *undeniable* title to it, because it is prepared for them in the will, pleasure, and grace of God; "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" because it is purchased for them by the blood of Christ; promised to them in the gospel; secured for them in the intercession of Christ; granted to them in the first fruits; and all this confirmed to them by the *oath of*

God; the first fruits they had in possession and use, the whole in right and title; and continual application of it was made to their souls by the *hope* which will not make ashamed.

How this substance is *better* than outward enjoyments, and *abiding*, needs not to be explained, they are things in themselves so plain and evident.

§10. (II.) The following short observations may be here made,

1. A wise management of former experience is a great direction and encouragement to future obedience.

2. All men by nature are darkness, and in darkness.

3. Saving illumination is the first fruit of effectual vocation.

4. Spiritual light in its first communication puts the soul on the diligent exercise of all graces.

5. It is suited to the wisdom and goodness of God to suffer persons on their first conversion to fall into manifold trials and temptations.

6. All temporary sufferings, in all their aggravating circumstances, in their most dreadful preparations and appearances, are but *light things* in comparison of the gospel and its precious promises.

7. There is nothing in the whole nature or circumstances of temporary sufferings, that we can claim an exemption from, after we have undertaken the profession of the gospel.

8. It is reserved to the sovereign pleasure of God, to measure out to all professors of the gospel their special lot and portion of trials and sufferings so as that none ought to complain, none envy one another.

§11. 1. Faith giving an *experience* of the excellency of the love of God in Christ, and of the grace received thereby, with its incomparable preference above all outward perishing things, will give joy and satisfaction



in the loss of them all, on account of an interest in these *better things*.

2. It is the glory of the gospel that it will, from a sense of an interest in it, afford satisfaction and joy in the worst of suffering for it.

3. It is our duty to take care that we be not surprised with outward sufferings, when we are in the dark as to our interest in these things.

4. Internal evidences of the beginnings of glory, in divine grace; a sense of God's love, and assured pledges of our adoption, will afford inseparable joy under the greatest outward sufferings.

5. It is our present and eternal interest to preserve our evidences for heaven clear and unstained, so that we may "know in ourselves" our right and title to it.

6. There is a *substance* in spiritual and eternal things, whereto faith gives a subsistence in the souls of believers. See chap. xi, 1.

7. There is no rule of proportion between eternal and temporal things; hence the enjoyment of the one will give joy in the loss of the other.

#### VERSES 35, 36.

*Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward; for ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

§1. (I.) Connexion and exposition of the words. Not to cast away confidence, what. §2. The matter of it. §3. The season of continuing the duty. §4. (II.) Observations.

§1. (I.) **I**N these two verses there is both an *inference* from the former argument, and a *confirmation* of it; the *inference* is plain; seeing you have suffered so many things in your persons and goods, seeing God by the power of his grace hath carried you through with satisfaction and joy, do not now despond. The

confirmation lies in ver. 26; that which he exhorts them to is the preservation and continuance of their (παρρησιαν) *confidence*, as to invincible constancy of mind and boldness in professing the gospel, in the face of all difficulties, through a trust in God, and a valuation of the eternal reward.

This confidence which hath been of such use to them, they are exhorted (μη αποβαλητε) *not to cast away*; he doth not say, *leave* it not, *forego* it not; but “cast it not away;” for where any graces have been stirred up to their due exercise, and have had success, they will not fail, nor be lost, without some *positive act* of the mind in rejecting them. When *faith*, on any occasion, is impaired and ensnared, this *confidence* will not abide; and so soon as we begin to fail in our confidence, it will reflect weakness on faith itself; and hence it appears how great is the evil here dehorted from, and what a certain entrance it will prove into apostasy itself if not seasonably prevented.

§2. What the apostle, as to the *matter* of it, here calls a recompence of reward,” he in the next verse, from the formal cause of it, calls *the promise*, that promise which we receive after we have done the will of God; wherefore, what is here intended is the *glory of heaven*, proposed as a *reward* by way of *recompence* to them that overcome in their sufferings for the gospel. A free gift of God, for the “wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” They are as sure in divine promises as in our own profession; and although they are yet future, faith gives them a *present subsistence* in the soul, as to their power and efficacy, for ye have need of (υπομονης) *patience*; a bearing of evils with quietness and complacency of mind, without raging, fretting, despondency, or inclination to complacence

with ~~undue~~ ways of deliverance: "In *patience* possess your souls;" *confidence* will engage men in trouble and difficulties in a way of duty; but if *patience* take not up the work, and carry it on, confidence will flag and fail. See chap vi, 11, 12. *Patience* is the perfecting grace of suffering Christians, Jam. i, 4.

This, saith the apostle, "you have need of." He speaks not absolutely of the grace itself, as though they had it not, but of its *continual exercise* in their condition; and the *necessity* here intimated is grounded on these two suppositions;—That those who profess the gospel in sincerity shall ordinarily meet with *trials* on the account of that profession; and—that without the constant exercise of *patience*, none can pass through them to the glory of God, and their own advantage in obtaining the promise of eternal life. *Patience* is not a mere endurance of trouble, but is, indeed, the due exercise of all graces under sufferings; nor can any grace be acted in that condition where *patience* is wanting: it is therefore indispensably necessary for this condition.

§3. "That after ye have done the will of God." There is no discharge from his duty until we have done the will of God. The *will* of God is twofold;—the will of his *purpose* and good pleasure, the eternal act of his counsel, which is accompanied with infinite wisdom concerning all things which shall come to pass; and—the will of his *command* presenting to us a required duty. And both these senses, I judge, are included in this place.

What is meant here by the "*promise*" is evident from the context; even all the promises of grace and mercy in the covenant which they had already received. God had not only given them the *promises* of these things, but he had given them the *good things*

*themselves*, as to their degrees and the measures of their enjoyment in this world. And as to the *promise of eternal life* and glory, they had received that also, and did mix it with faith; but the *thing itself promised* they had not received. This *different notion* of the promises, the apostle declares, chap. xi, 17, 39; as we shall see, God willing.

§4. (II.) From the whole observe the following things:

1. In times of suffering, and in the approaches of them, it is the duty of believers to look on the glory of heaven under the notion of a refreshing, all-sufficient reward.

2. He that would abide faithful in difficult seasons, must fortify his soul with an unconquerable patience.

3. The glory of heaven is an abundant recompence for all we undergo in our ways towards it.

4. Believers ought to sustain themselves in their sufferings with the promise of future glory.

5. The future blessedness is given us by promise, and is therefore free and undeserved.

6. The consideration of eternal life, as the free effect of divine grace, and as proposed in a gracious promise, is a thousand times more full of spiritual refreshment to a believer, than if he should conceive of it as a reward proposed to our own doings or merits.

#### VERSES 37—39.

*For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

§1. Introduction. §2. (I.) Exposition of the words. He that was to come, Christ. §3. The just living by faith. §4. The contrary character. §5. The sentence denounced against apostasy. §6. The apostle's charitable conclusion concerning the Hebrews. §7—10. (II) Observations:

§1. **THE** substance of the *apostolical exhortation*, as hath been often observed, is to inspire the Hebrews

with constancy in their profession against persecutions and temptations. To this end he commends to them the necessary use of *confidence* and *patience*; and in these verses, he makes a *transition* to the consideration of *faith* itself, whereunto he resolves the whole consideration to constancy.

§2. (I.) "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." It might arise in the minds of these Hebrews, that it was a *long time* for them to be exercised with these troubles, and they might begin to fear they should be worn out by them. To encourage them against the influence of this temptation, the apostle accommodates a testimony out of the prophet Habbakuk, which leads him directly to the consideration of the power and efficacy of *faith*, Hab. ii, 3, 4. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it shall surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith." He speaks of a "vision," that is, a *prophetical vision* of good things, which God would effect in due time; and there is the same reason, in general, of all the promises of God. "*Though it tarry,*" saith he, that is, seem to you to do so; for believers are apt, under their sufferings, to regard the seeming delays of the accomplishment of divine promises, of long continuance; (as wicked men and scoffers, on the contrary, harden themselves in their sins and impieties on the same account of God's threatenings, 2. Pet. iii, 3, 4,) but, saith he, "*it will not tarry,*" that is, although it seem to you to do so, and are dejected about it, yet there is an appointed time for it, and in *itself* no long time, beyond which it shall not be deferred one moment, Isa. lx, 22; 2, Pet, iii. This whole sense the

apostle compriseth in this short verse,—(*Μικρον*) *a little space*; though it seem to tarry, wait for it, it will come after a *short space of time*, as if he had said, “My brethren faint not, be not weary nor discouraged, keep up confidence and patience, you know what you expect, which will be an abundant recompence to you for all your sufferings; and whatever appearances there may be of its *tarrying*, whatever it may seem to you, yet if you have but a prospect into eternity, be it what it will, it is but a *very little while*.”—“He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” What the prophet spake of the *vision* he saw, the apostle applies to the person of Christ, (*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*) *he that shall come*; for this term is frequently used as a *periphrasis* of him. Once it is used to express his eternity, Rev. i. 8; but generally it hath respect to the promise of him; yet, after he was come in the flesh, he was *to come* again on a double account.

1. In the power of his Spirit, and the exercise of his royal authority; the assistance of his Spirit, with his miraculous operations with the ministers of the gospel, was an illustrious advent of Christ, not in his own person, but in that of his representative, whom he promised to send in his stead.

He was *to come* in the exercise of his royal authority, for the punishment and destruction of his stubborn and inveterate adversaries; and thus, in respect of his enemies, Christ is still “*he that is to come*,” and as such, is to be believed in, and his *coming* prayed for by all the saints; for he is to destroy “the man of sin,” the head of the apostasy, by the brightness of his *coming*.

2. Christ is (*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*) *he who is to come*; with respect to his *coming to judgment* at the last day: this is known and confessed, and the business of his com-

ing therein is the prayer of the whole church, Rev. xxii, 20. To every state of the church there is a *coming of Christ* suited and accommodated to their condition, whereby their faith is kept in continual exercise of desires after it. This was the *life of faith* under the Old Testament, as to his coming in the flesh, until it was accomplished. *This faith*, after his resurrection, they *lived by*, though but for a short season, until he came in the power of his Spirit, and his miraculous operations, to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Nor do I understand how the just can live by faith, without a continual expectation of the *coming of Christ*, in a way suited to the sufferings and deliverance of his church. All the saints have exercised faith in this word, that it was but a *little while*, and he that shall come, will come; and the case is the same with those who suffer under the antichristian apostasy. They live by faith in the expectation of that coming of Christ, where-with the man of sin shall be consumed; and although it seem to tarry, they wait for it: this is the faith and patience of the saints.

Wherefore the *end* for which this coming of Christ is proposed to the church, being the support and encouragement of their souls to faith and patience, a respect must be had to such a coming, as is suited to their relief in their present state and condition; and this, to these Hebrews, was then (*ἐτι μικρον ὄσον ὄσον*) *yet a little while*, in a literal sense. It is *accommodated* to all other states of the church, and the consideration of the coming of Christ, at the last day, to the final and eternal judgment, ought not to be omitted.

§3. "Now the just shall live by faith;" the Greek particle (*δε*) which we render "*now*," is taken for (1) the Hebrew prefix, which is oftentimes *exceptive*

(ἵνα) and in the prophet the expression is plain, because it followeth the description of the *contrary* frame to what is here asserted, "whose heart is lifted up." But the Greek particle (δε) hath the force of an *exceptive* only in respect to the difficulty supposed in the case under consideration, the sufferings and temptations of professors, and the appearance of delay as to their deliverance out of them. "But," saith the apostle, notwithstanding these things, "the just shall live by faith," (ὁ δίκαιος) *a just person*, a man really made just, or justified by faith. Yet what is principally here intended, is that *qualification* of a righteous man, which is opposed to pride and *haste of spirit* through unbelief, whereon men draw back from God in the profession of the gospel. The *just man*, he who is humble, meek, sincere, subdued to the will of God, waiting for his pleasure, as all justified persons are in their several degrees—*shall live*; for he is free from the principle of pride and unbelief, which ruins the souls of men in times of trial. "Shall live by faith," (ἐκ πίστεως) *by faith*, may be joined with (ὁ δίκαιος) *the just*, and so express the *instrumental cause* whereby a man becomes to be *just*. Or it may denote the way whereby a just man perseveres even *to life*, in his profession; and this sense I embrace, because it is an entrance into the demonstration of the mighty things which have been done and suffered *through faith* by believers. Whatever difficulties and oppositions a just man meets with in the way to life eternal, faith will carry him through them with safety and success. "He shall live," *life* in both the principal senses of it is here intended:—he shall not die from his profession; he shall not perish as trees plucked up from the roots, twice dead; he shall maintain a spiritual life, the life of God, as the psalmist speaks, "I shall not die but live, and declare the



loving kindness of the Lord." And, finally, he shall live, attain the promise of eternal life; or, as in the next verse, "believe to the saving of the soul."

§4. In the *latter part* of the verse there is a description of others, on a supposition of the contrary state and event. In the former the person is *righteous*, the way of his acting is *by faith*, and the event is *life*; "he shall live." On the other hand, there is a supposition made of a person *not so qualified*, not so acting, not so living, not having the same success, but contrary in all these things. Wherefore, they do greatly deceive themselves and others, who suppose it is the *same person* who is thus spoken of, and countenance themselves by the defect of the pronoun (*τις*) *any one*, which is naturally and necessarily supplied in our translation. Wherefore, in the next verse, the apostle makes an express distinction concerning whom he speaks in the two states; the one, (*υποδολης*) of *perdition*; the other, (*πιστεως*) of *faith*. Of the *latter* he had spoken in the first words, and of the *former* in these; I shall therefore retain the supplement, "*if any man, or any one, draw back,*" "if there be in *any* an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

There is an appearance of a great change in the words of the prophet. For "*his soul,*" which in the prophet is referred to the persons *offending*, is by the apostle referred to God who is *offended*. But it is enough that the apostle gives us the *plain general sense*; and indeed he seldom keeps to the proper words of the testimonies he quotes, but always gives the *mind* of the Holy Ghost in them. (*Υποστειλῆται*) *draw back*; the word in the prophet denotes the *cause of the sin* intended. The *original* of all defection from the gospel is a sinful relation of heart, not submitting to, no

acquiescing in the *will of God*, not satisfied with the condition of temporal sufferings on the account of the eternal reward. When men are under the power of this evil frame of heart, they will *draw back*, subduct themselves out of that state and condition wherein they are exposed to these inconveniencs. "*If any man*" who makes a profession of faith in Christ and the gospel, "*withdraw*" himself from that profession, and communion with them who persist faithful in it, "*any heart shall not,*" &c. This is the evil which the great design of the whole epistle is to obviate and prevent.

§5. The *sentence* denounced against this sin is, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The *soul* of God is *God himself*; but he so speaks of himself, to affect us with a due apprehension of his concern in what he so speaks, as we are affected with what our souls and minds, and all our affections, are engaged in. So God promises to the church that he will rejoice over them with his whole heart, and with his whole soul. He hath *no delight* in such a person, he is *not pleased* with him, he shall not live before him. There is a *meiosis* in the words he will *abhor* him, *despise* him, and in the end utterly *destroy* him. All apostates have some pretence for what they do, wherewith they justify themselves, until their iniquity be found out to be hateful. Wherefore to deprive them of this pretence, the apostle declares, "that the soul of God takes no pleasure in them," in which all positive evils are included. For when God doth not delight in any person, the consequence is that he will utterly destroy them. See Jerem. xv, 1,

§6. "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition;" we are not (*υποφωλις εις απαρειαν*) of *withdrawing*, that is, of them who withdraw or draw back unto perdition. No small numbers there were

who, even then, were falling into apostasy. This whole band of rovers, though in profession harnessed like the children of Ephraim, turned their backs in the day of battle: the *event* of this defection was *destruction*. Gradual decays and declensions there may be among true believers, from which they may be recovered; but those here intended are such as fall into *eternal* ruin, as appears from the *antithesis*, wherein it is opposed to the "*saving of the soul*."

"But of them who believe to the saving of the soul," What is *asserted* of these believing Hebrews is, that they belonged to another *state* which had another *event*. But we are (*πίστεως*) of *faith*, of that which is effectual (*ως περιποίησις ψυχης*) to the *saving of the soul*. Both here, and in the former clause, not only the event but the *actual influence* of apostasy on the one hand to destruction, and of faith on the other to the saving of the soul, is intended; as the preposition (*ως*) intimates.

§7. (II.) From the words and exposition let us observe:

1. The delay of the accomplishment of promises is a great exercise of faith and patience; hence are all the exhortations not to faint in our minds.

2. It is essential to the profitable exercise of faith, when we look for Christ's appearance, that it be acted on the *promise* of his coming.

3. There is a promise of the coming of Christ suited to the state and condition of the church in all ages.

4. The appearing delay of the accomplishment of any of these promises requires an exercise of the faith and patience of the saints.

5. Every such coming of Christ hath its appointed season, beyond which it shall not tarry.

6. This divine disposal of things renders necessary the continual exercise of faith, prayer, and patience about the coming of Christ.

7. Although we may not know the *special* dispensations of time that are passing over us, yet all believers may know the state, in general, of that church in which they are, and what *coming of Christ* they are to expect.

8. Faith is satisfied with the *promise* of a good, or a deliverance to the church; although a man be persuaded that personally he shall not enjoy it; the faith of this kind is for the *church*, and not for men's individual persons.

9. Under despondencies as to any peculiar appearances or *comings* of Christ, it is the duty of believers to fix and exercise their faith on his illustrious appearance at the last day.

10. Every particular coming of Christ in a way suited to the present deliverance of the church, is an infallible pledge of his coming at the last day to judgment.

11. Every promised coming of Christ is certain, and shall not be delayed beyond its appointed season, when no difficulties shall be able to stand before it.

§8. 1. There are special qualifications of grace required to steadfastness in profession in times of persecution and long continued trials.

2. Many things are required to secure the success of our profession in times of difficulties and trials; as— that our persons are *righteous* or justified by grace;— that we be *furnished* with those graces that are appointed to that end; and— that faith be kept to a diligent exercise.

3. The continuance of the spiritual life, and eternal

salvation of true believers, are secured from all oppositions whatever.

§9. 1. No persons whatever ought to be on any consideration secure against those sins to which present circumstances give an efficacy.

2. It is an effect of spiritual wisdom to discern what is the dangerous and prevailing temptation of any season, and vigorously to set ourselves in opposition to it.

3. It is much to be feared, that in great trials some will draw back from that profession of the gospel wherein they are engaged.

4. This defection is commonly durable, continued by various pretences; this is included in the original word (*υποσείηλει*) *gradually and covertly to subduct* himself.

§10. 1. It is our duty to look diligently that we are of that holy frame of mind, that due exercise of faith, as the soul of God may take pleasure in us,

2. Though there appear as yet no outward tokens of the anger and displeasure of God against our ways; yet if we are in that state wherein God hath no pleasure in us, we are entering into certain ruin.

3. Backsliders from the gospel are in a peculiar manner the abhorrency of the soul of God.

4. When the soul of God is not delighted in any, nothing can preserve them from utter destruction.

5. The scripture every where testifieth, that in the visible church there is a certain number of false hypocrites, whose end and lot it is to be destroyed.

6. It is our most urged duty to evidence to our own consciences, and give evidence to others, that we are not of this number.

7. Nothing can free apostates from eternal ruin.

## CHAPTER XI.

## VERSE 1.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

§1. The apostle's great argument recapitulated. His present design. §2. His definition of faith. §3, 4. (I.) The substance of things hoped for. §5. (II.) The evidence of things not seen. §6, (III.) Observations. §7. Great objections are apt to lie against invisible things when externally revealed. §8, 9. Remaining observations.

§1. **T**HE general nature of this epistle, as *hortatory*, hath been repeatedly noticed; and the apostle—having evidently declared from the scripture itself that the state of the gospel church in its high priest, sacrifice, covenant, worship, privileges, and efficacy, is incomparably to be preferred above that of the Old Testament; yea, that all the excellency and glory of that state, and all that belonged to it, consisted only in the *representation* that was made thereby of the *greater glory of Christ* and the gospel, without which they were of no use, and therefore pernicious to be persisted in;—having fixed their minds in the truth, and armed them against the *temptations* which they were continually exposed to, the *opposition* which befell them, and the *persecutions* they were like to undergo from the obstinate members of the Jewish church;—having hinted, at the close of the last chapter, that the only way and means on their part, whereby they may be kept constant to their profession, notwithstanding all the evils that might befall them, is by faith alone;—being thus delivered from *temptations* by the *doctrine of truth*, and from the opposition made to them by *faith in exercise*;—the apostle, I say, proceeds to shew what this faith is, and produces abundant evidence to

prove that it is *able* to effect this great work of preserving men in the profession of the truth, under bloody and destructive persecutions.

This being the design of the apostle, the missing of it hath caused sundry contests about the nature of *justifying faith*, which is here not at all spoken to; for the apostle treats not of *justification*, or of *faith as justifying*, but of its efficacy and operation in *them who are justified*, with respect to constancy and perseverance in their profession, notwithstanding the difficulties which they have to conflict with; as it is treated of James ii.

And here, before we descend to a particular discussion, we may remark, that it is faith alone, which, from the beginning of the world, under all dispensations of divine grace, and all alterations in the church state and worship, hath been in the church the only principle of living unto God, of obtaining the promises, and of inheriting life eternal.

2. "Faith is the (*υποστασις*) *substance* of things hoped for;" this word is used, besides, 2 Cor. ix, 4; xi, 17, thrice in this epistle; in the first it is applied to express a distinct *manner of subsistence* in the divine nature, chap i, 3. In the second a *firm persuasion* of the truth, supporting our souls in the profession of it; chap. iii, 14. In this place, we render it *substance*; more properly it is a real *subsistence*, as opposed to appearing phantasms. The sense of the place is well expressed in the Greek scholiast; "whereas things that are in hope only, have no subsistence of their own as being not present; faith becomes the *subsistence* of them, making them to be present after a certain manner;" and the *Syriac*, "a persuasion of the things that are in *hope*, as if they were to them in *effect*;" which goes a great way towards the true exposition of the

words. I shall, however, retain the word "*substance*," as opposed to what hath no *real being* or *subsistence*, but only an *appearance* of things.

Unto this faith two things are ascribed; that it is the *substance of things hoped for*—and, the *evidence of things not seen*; having discussed these two things, we shall subjoin some *observations*.

§3. (I.) Faith is the *substance* (*ὑπόστασις*) of *things hoped for*; these, in general, are things good, promised, future, expected on unfailing grounds; all things of present grace and future glory. Hope in God for these things, to be received in their appointed season, is the great support of believers, under all their trials in the whole course of their profession, obedience, temptation, and sufferings; things *hoped for*, and things *unseen*, are not absolutely the same; for there are things *unseen* which are the objects of faith, and yet not *hoped for*; such is the creation of the world, where-in the apostle gives an instance. To the things intended, faith gives present *subsistence* as they are *real*, and *evidence* as they are *true*; their futurity, and distance, faith supplies, and gives them a *real subsistence*; and where do they subsist as if they were actually in effect, whilst they are yet *hoped for*? "In them," saith the *Syriac* translation; that is, in them that believe.

§4. There are several ways whereby faith gives a present subsistence to things future and hoped for:

1. By mixing itself with the *promises* wherein they are contained; divine promises do not only declare the good things promised,—that there are such things which God will bestow on believers; but they contain them by virtue of divine institution; hence are they called the "*breasts of consolation*," Isa. lxvi, 11; as those which contain the refreshment they exhibit and convey; they are the *treasury* in which God hath laid



them up; hence "to receive a promise," actively, is to receive the *things promised* which are contained in them, and exhibited by them, 2 Pet. i, 4; now faith *mixeth* and incorporateth itself with the word of promise, whereby what is in the word becomes its own, the things themselves believed are enjoyed, and this is their *subsistence in us*.

2. By giving the soul a *taste* of their *goodness*; yea, making them its food, which they cannot be unless they are *really present* to it; we not only by faith "taste that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii, 3; that is, have an *experience* of the *grace* of God in *sweetness* and *goodness* of the things promised and bestowed, but the *word itself* is the meat, the food, the milk, and strong meat of believers; because it really exhibits to their faith the *goodness*, *sweetness*, and nourishing virtue of spiritual things; they feed on them, and they incorporate with them, which is their *present subsistence*.

3. It gives an experience of their *power*, as to all the ends for which they are promised. Their use and end in general is to change and transform the whole soul into the image of God, by a conformity to Jesus Christ the first-born. This we lost by sin, and this the good things of the promise restore us to, Eph. iv, 20—24. It is not *truth*, merely as truth, but truth as conveying the things contained in it unto the soul, that is powerfully operative to this end. This is an eminent way of faith's giving a subsistence to things hoped for, in the souls of believers. Where this is not, they are to men as clouds afar off, which yield them no refreshing showers. *Expectation* of "things hoped for," when they are not in this power and efficacy brought by faith into the soul, are ruinous self-deceivings. For them to have a *subsistence* in us is for them so to *abide* in us in their power and efficacy as to answer all the ends of our spiritual life, see Eph. iii, 16—19.

4. It really communicates unto us, or we receive by it, the *first fruits of them all*. In believers they are present; they subsist, even the greatest, most glorious, and heavenly of them, in their *first fruits*. These *first fruits* are the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of *grace, sanctification, supplication, and consolation*, Rom. viii, 23. For he is the *seal, the earnest, the pledge* of present grace and future glory; all the good things "*hoped for*," 2 Cor. i, 22. This Spirit we receive by *faith*; the world "*cannot receive him*," John xiv, 17: The *law* could not give him, Gal. iii, 2. And wherever he is, there is (*υποστασις*) a *present subsistence* of all things hoped for, in their beginning, benefit, and assurance.

5. It gives a *representation* of their beauty and glory to the minds of believers, whereby they behold them as if they were present. So Abraham by *faith* "*saw the day of Christ*," and rejoiced, and the saints under the Old Testament saw the "*king in his beauty*."

§5. (II.) It is said in the description of the faith, that it is (*ελεγχος ἢ βλεπομενων*) the *evidence of things not seen*. By "*things not seen*" the apostle intends all those things which are not proposed to our outward senses, but which ought to influence our constancy and perseverance in profession; now these are God himself, the holy properties of his nature, the person of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, all spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things that are promised, and not yet actually enjoyed.

Again; of these invisible things *faith* is said to be the (*ελεγχος*) *evidence*, that which *demonstrates, the revelation*. Properly, it is such a proof or demonstration of any thing, as carries with it a confutation of all objections to the contrary. Thus faith is a *convincing evidence*, plainly reproofing and refuting all

things that make any pretensions against the truth so evidenced.

§6. (III.) From hence observe,

1. No faith will carry us through the difficulties of our profession, from oppositions within and without, giving us constancy and perseverance therein to the end, but that which gives the good things hoped for a real *subsistence* in our mind; but when, by mixing itself with the promise, which is the foundation of hope, (for to hope for any thing but what is promised, is to deceive ourselves) it gives us a taste of their goodness, an experience of their power, the inhabitation of their first fruits, and a view of their glory, it will infallibly effect the blessed end.

2. The peculiar specific nature of faith, whereby it is differenced from all other powers, acts, and graces in the mind, lies in this, that it *lives* on, or makes a *life* of things invisible. It is not only conversant about them, but *mixeth itself* with them, making them the spiritual nourishment of the soul.

3. It is the glory of our religion, that it depends on, and is resolved into, *invisible things*; they are far more excellent and glorious than any thing sense can behold or reason discover, 1 Cor. ii, 9.

§7. *Obs.* Great objections are apt to lie against invisible things, when externally revealed. Men would fain live the life of sense, or at least believe no more than what they can have a scientific demonstration of. But by these means we can have no evidence of invisible things; or, at best, not such as may influence properly our Christian profession: this is done by faith alone. We may have *apprehensions* of some of these things by reason and the light of nature, as the apostle declares, Rom. i, 19, &c; but we cannot have such an evidence of them as shall have the prop-

actings of the (*αεγγος*) demonstration here intended; it will not reprove and silence the objections and sophisms of unbelief against them; it will not influence our souls to a patient continuance in well doing. Now *faith* is not the evidence and demonstration of these things to *all*, which the *scripture* alone is, but only to *believers*. They have this evidence of them in themselves; for,

(1.) Faith is that gracious power of the mind, whereby it firmly assents to divine revelations, upon the sole authority of God the revealer, as the first essential truth, and fountain of all truth.

(2.) It is by faith that all *objections* against them, their being and reality, are answered and refuted; which is required to (*αεγγος*) a convincing demonstration. Many such there are, over all which faith is victorious, Ephes. vi, 16. All the temptations of Satan, especially such as are called his "*fiery darts*," consist in objections against invisible things; either as to their *being*, or as to our *interest* in them. All the actings of *unbelief* in us are to the same purpose; to *reprove* and silence them is the work of faith alone; and it is such a work as without which we cannot maintain our spiritual life, neither its power within or its fruitful and consistent profession without.

(3.) Faith brings into the soul an experience of their power and efficacy, whereby it is cast into the mould of them, or made conformable to them, Rom. vi, 17; Ephes. iv, 21—23. This gives an *assurance* to the mind, though not of the same nature, yet more excellent than that of any scientific demonstration.

§8. *Oba.* Faith, in its being thus the "*evidence of things not seen*," is the great means of preserving believers in a constant, patient profession of the gospel against all opposition, and under the fiercest persecu-

tions; which is in a peculiar manner what the apostle aims at to demonstrate: for,

(1.) It *plainly discovers* that the *worst* of what we can undergo in this world for the profession of the gospel, bears no proportion to the excellency and glory of those invisible things, in which, as Christians, we are interested.

(2.) It brings in such a *present sense* of their goodness, power, and efficacy, that not only relieves and refresheth the soul under all its sufferings, but makes it *joyful* in them and victorious over them.

(3.) It gives an *assurance* hereby of the greatness and glory of the eternal reward, which is the greatest encouragement to constancy in believing, 1 Pet. iv, 12, 13.

§9. *Obs.* It is faith alone, that takes believers out of this world whilst they are in it, that exalts them above it whilst they are under its rage; that enables them to live upon things future and invisible, giving such a real subsistence to their power, and victorious evidence of their reality and truth, in themselves, as secures them from fainting under all oppositions, temptations, and persecutions whatever.

#### VERSE 2.

*For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

§1. Connexion of the words. §2. The elders, who. §3. The testimony given them. §4. Obtained by faith. §5. Observations.

§1. **T**HE efficacy of this faith the apostle now proceeds to prove by the signal and illustrious *effects* it hath had in those of old who were the subjects of it. "For by it the elders," &c. The conjunctive particle (*γὰρ*) *for*, introduces a proof, by way of instance, of what was before asserted; as if the apostle had said,

"The nature and efficacy of faith is such as I have described; *for by it the elders,*" &c. This they could no way have done, but by that faith whereof these are the properties. *Note, instances, or examples, are the most powerful confirmations of practical truths.*

§2. Who these (*πρεσβυτεροι*) *elders* were, is put beyond all dispute by the ensuing discourse. All true believers from the foundation of the world, or the giving of the first promise, to the end of the dispensation of the Old Testament, are intended; for in all sorts of them he giveth particular instances, from Abel to those who suffered the last persecution that the Jewish church underwent *for religion*, ver. 36—38. What befell them afterwards was *judgment* and punishment for sin, not persecution for religion: all these, by one general name, he calleth "the elders." Thus was it constantly with *all believers*, from the beginning of the world called the *elders*, as having lived before us in ancient times.

§3. (*Εμαρτυρηθησαν*) *testimony was given to them* in the scripture; to many of them in particular, and to the rest in the general rules of it. It is the *Holy Spirit* in the scripture, who gives them that *good testimony*, and to whom the apostle appeals for the proof of his assertion. From the *world* things were otherwise with them, none so defamed, so reproached, so reviled as they. If they had received such a *good report* in the world, their example would not have been of use to the apostle's design; for he applies it to them who were made a "gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions," chap. x, 33, 34; as it had been with many of them who yet obtained this testimony. "They had trials of cruel mockings," &c. ver. 36, 37. *Note,* They who have a good testimony from God, shall never want reproaches from the world.

§4. What was so testified of them by the Holy Ghost is, that they *pleased God*, or were accepted with him, and constituted righteous, ver. 4—6, &c. (*ev au/y*) *by it, their faith*; through their *believing* they “obtained this report.” Many great and excellent things, some heroic actions, some deep sufferings, are ascribed to them; but their obtaining this testimony is assigned to *faith alone*; for those were *fruits* of their faith, and their acceptance with God depended thereon.

§5. Hence we may observe,

1. It is *faith alone*, which from the beginning of the world, (or from the giving of the first promise) was the means and way of obtaining acceptance with God. There hath been great variety as to the revealed *objects* of this faith, but the faith itself is of the *same nature* and kind in all from first to last; and all the promises of God, as branches of the first promise, are in general the formal object of it; that is, Christ in them, without faith in whom none have found acceptance with God.

2. The faith of true believers, from the beginning of the world, was fixed on things future, *hoped for*, and *invisible*; that is, eternal life and glory in an especial manner: that was the faith whereby they “obtained a good report,” as the apostle here testifies. So vain is the imagination of them who affirm, that all the promises under the Old Testament respected only things temporal; so making the whole church to have been Sadducees: the contrary is here expressly affirmed.

3. That faith whereby men please God, acts itself in a fixed contemplation of things future and invisible, from whence it derives encouragement and strength to abide firm in their profession, and endure to the end, against all oppositions. To which we may add,

4. That however men may be despised, vilified, and

reproached in the world, yet if they are true believers, they are accepted with God, and he will give them a good report.

## VERSE 3.

*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

§1. Connexion and design. §2. Faith, when spoken of as the instrumental cause, includes its object. Is superior, and sometimes contrary, to the boasted principles of reason; and give a clear understanding of facts in their true causes. §3; 4. The making of the worlds, how an object of faith. §5. Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle now enters on the confirmation and exemplification of his proposition by instances; first, from *an especial object* of faith, and then proceeds to the *actings* of it in believers. In this first instance of the power and efficacy of faith, the apostle hath respect to the second clause of his general description of it, the *evidence of things not seen*; for although this world, and the things contained in it, are *visible*, and are here said to be *seen*, yet the original *framing* and making of them hath a principal place among things *not seen*. And to prove that faith hath a respect to unseen things, *as unseen*, he gives an instance in that which was so long *past* as the creation of the world; all his other instances declare its efficacy in the prospect of unseen things that are *future*.

§2. "*By faith we understand.*" Where *faith* is spoken of as the *instrumental cause* of any thing, it always includes *its object* as the principal cause of the same things. So where it is said, that we are "*justified by faith,*" it includes Christ and his righteousness as the principal *cause* of our justification; faith being only the instrument whereby we apprehend it: and here, where it is said, that "*by faith*" we understand



that the worlds were framed, it necessarily includes its *object*, the divine revelation that is made thereof in the word of God; for there is no other way for faith to give us an understanding of it.

The apostle here lays a good foundation of all his following assertions; for if by faith we are assured of the creation of the world *out of nothing*, which is contrary to the most received principle of natural reason, (*ex nihilo nihil fit*) *nothing comes of nothing*, it will bear us out in the belief of other things that seem impossible to reason, if so be they are incontestably revealed. In particular, faith well fixed on the original of all things as made out of nothing, will bear us out in the belief of the resurrection of our bodies, which the apostle takes notice of with respect to some of his worthies.

“By faith we *understand*,” that is, by faith we not only assent to the divine revelation of it, but also come to have a due comprehension of it in its *causes*, so as that we may be said to *understand* it: wherefore “understanding” here is not opposed only to an utter *ignorance*, but also to that dark and confused apprehension of the creation of the world, which some by the light of reason attained to.

§3. (Τὰς αἰωνας καταρτίσθαι) *that the worlds were framed*. The word always denotes the ordering, disposing, fitting, perfecting, or adorning of what is produced; the reducing of all created things into that *beautiful order* which we behold; and the apostle hath an especial respect to the things that *are seen*, as they are orderly, beautiful, and glorious, setting forth the glory of their Maker, (Psal. viii, 2, 3; xix, i, 2; Rom. i, 21: so it is said, that “God by his Spirit *garnished* the heavens,” Job xxvi, 13; that is, cast them into that curious, glorious frame which we behold; and the apostle hath in

this word respect to Gen. ii, 1, (לְבַר) "The heavens and the earth, and all the host of them were *finished*," *perfected*, and *completely framed*.

(Πημὰι Θεῶ) *by the word of God*; the ineffable facility of almighty power; he spake the word, and it was made; he commanded, and it stood fast. And surely it is alike easy unto him to *dispose* of all things that *are made*; and so faith, as to the disposal of all things by divine Providence, in times of great difficulties, and inseparable obstacles, is secured by the consideration of the *easy production* of all things out of nothing by the same power; how easy is it with God to help, relieve, and deliver them by changing, if necessary, the nature of all these things at his pleasure, who by his word, through an almighty facility, erected and perfected the worlds! And this consideration doth God himself frequently propose for the confirmation of the faith of the church, in all her troubles, Isa. xl, 28; xlv, 24; xlv, 12; li, 13.

4. "So the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear;"—(Τα βλεπομενα) *things which are seen*; which are the objects of our senses, and our reason working by them; these aspectable *heavens*, with all their glorious luminaries; the *earth*, with all its furniture and ornaments; the *sea*, with all its fulness; their greatness, their glory, their order, and their use, with which the minds of men ought to be affected.

Of these things it is affirmed, that they were not made (ἐκ Φαινομενον) *of things that do appear*; which seems to be a negation of any pre-existing natural cause; the word (Φαινομενα) imports, things that appear *clearly, illustriously*, in their shape and order. The understanding of this we have by *faith alone* from divine revelation; for nothing of the *order of creating*, can be known or understood any other way;

and this the apostle intimates in the particles, (*εἰς το, i. e. ὥστε*) *so that*; by faith alone we understand that the worlds were made, so as "that the things which are seen were not made of things that appear."

§5. Hence we may observe,

1. Those who firmly assent to divine revelation, understand the creation of the world as to its truth, reason, cause, manner, and end; it was never determined among the ancient sages of the world, the pretended priests of the mysteries of reason; some said one thing, and some another; some said it had a beginning, some said it had none, and some assigned it such a beginning, as it had better never had any; nothing but an assent to divine revelation can give us a *clear understanding* of it. And,

2. Then doth faith put forth its power in our minds in a due manner, when it gives us clear and distinct apprehensions of the things believed; faith that gives not *understanding* is but fancy.

3. As God's first work was perfect, so all his works shall be; he undertakes nothing, but what he will finish and complete in beauty and order; and not only the original production of all things out of nothing, but also the *framing* of them into their present order, is a demonstration of this eternal power of God.

4. The aids of reason, with the due consideration of the nature, use, and end of all things, ought to be *admitted* for confirming our minds in the persuasion of the original creation of all things; yet they are not to be *rested in*, but we must betake ourselves to *faith* fixed on divine revelation; for if they are *alone*, they will be shaken with a contrary maxim, (*ex nihilo nihil fit*) of *nothing nothing comes*; and they can give us no light into the *way and manner* of the creation of all things, which faith discovers.

## VERSE 4.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

§1. Connexion. §2, 3. (I.) Exposition. §4. Abel's sacrifice better than Cain's. §5. The testimony given it. §6. How he yet speaketh. §7, 8. (II.) Observations.

§1. **F**ROM the *nature* of faith in general, and its *efficacy* with respect to things believed, the apostle proceeds to give *instances* of its power and efficacy in *particular persons*, whose example in believing he proposeth to the Hebrews for their *encouragement*; and he begins with Abel; the first whose faith is expressly recorded, and the first that suffered in the cause of Christ, by shedding his blood, which the Hebrews had not yet experienced; wherefore on all accounts this was the meetest instance to begin with.

§2. (I.) "By faith *Abel*," who without example, without any outward encouragement, without any witness of his sufferings to transmit them to others, but God alone, was the first in the world that suffered death in the cause of Christ and his worship, and that even from his *own brother*, who joined with him in the outward acts of divine worship; which is an example of the two churches, the *suffering*, and the *persecuting* to the end of the world; and this hath made him famous in all generations; which, as Chrysostom thinks, is intended in the close of the words, (ἐν λαλειν) *he is yet spoken of*, that is, with fame and renown. *Note*, Every circumstance in suffering shall add to the glory of the sufferer; and those who suffer here for Christ *without witness*, as many have done to death in prisons and dungeons, have yet an all-seeing Witness to give them testimony in due season. "The

righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;" and nothing that is done or suffered for God shall be lost for ever.

§3. "By faith Abel offered unto God." The original account is more particular; (Gen. iv, 3—5; **הַיָּמִים אַחֲרָיו**) *after the expiration of some time*, or days; after he and Cain were settled in their distinct callings, (ver. 3;) they had been until then under the instruction of their parents; but now being fixed in their own peculiar stations and callings, they made their distinct solemn profession of the worship of God; which is the sense of the place, though not observed by expositors. The matter of his offering was the *firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof*; it was of living creatures, and therefore was made by *mactation*, or the shedding of blood; whence the apostle calls it (*θυσια*) a sacrifice by mactation;—it was of the *best*; it was an *holocaust*, wherein after the blood was shed on the altar, and offered unto God, the *fat* was burned on the altar, and the whole *body* at a distance from it; therefore it appears, that Abel's was, as to the matter of it, both in itself, and in God's esteem, of the most precious and valuable things in the whole creation, subject to man and his use; and even hence it may be called (*κλειονα θυσια παρα Κάιν*) *a more excellent sacrifice than that of Cain*, which was only of the fruit of the ground that might be gathered (*raptim*) without choice of what was most meet to be offered.

And he offered this sacrifice *unto God*, (*τῷ Θεῷ, ליהוה* ver. 3;) this was, from the first institution of it, the highest and most peculiar way of paying homage to the Divine Being; for to whomsoever *sacrifice* is offered, he is owned as God; and therefore when the Gentiles sacrificed to the devils, as they did, 1 Cor. x, 20,

they owned him thereby as the "God of the world," 2 Cor. iv, 4.

He offered it (*πιστει*) *by faith*. Now faith herein respects;—the *institution* of the worship; and—the heart or *mind* of the worshippers. He did it *by faith*, because he had respect in what he did to God's *institution*, which consists of a *command* and a *promise*; had he himself invented the service he could not have performed it in *faith*, which in its *very nature* respects a divine command and a promise; again, he did it *in faith*, and that he did it in the *exercise* of saving faith in God; for he did it not hypocritically, nor in a mere attendance to the outward duty; but it was kindled in his own heart by the Holy Spirit, before it was fired on the altar from heaven.

§4. "A better sacrifice than Cain;" a *choicer*, a *more excellent* sacrifice (*κατα Κάιν*) *than Cain*; we observed before, that as to the *matter* of it, it was *better*, *more valuable* and precious than that of Cain; but this is not a sufficient cause of ascribing such an excellency and preference to it, as that, on account of it, Abel should obtain such acceptance with God, and receive a testimony from him; besides, the design of the apostle is to declare the efficacy and prevalency of *faith*, and not of any special kind of *sacrifices*; wherefore, (*δι ης*) *for which*, or *whereby*, in the next words, is to be referred to (*πιστει*) *faith*, and not to (*θυσιαν*) *sacrifice*; this difference therefore was from his *faith*; and two things depended thereon;—that his *person* was justified in the sight of God antecedently to his sacrifice; and,—that on account thereof his *sacrifice* was acceptable, as is commonly observed from the order of the words; "the Lord had respect unto Abel and his *offering*;" but yet it is not so evident where the great *difference* lay; for Cain also, no doubt, brought his offering in *faith*;

for he believed the being of God, his omnipotent power in the creation of the world, as also his government of it with rewards and punishments; for all this he *professed* in the sacred *offering* that he brought unto the Lord; wherefore it is certain that the faith of Abel and Cain differed—in their *objects*, and—in their *special nature* and *acts*.

1. Cain considered God only as a creator and preserver, whereon he offered the fruits of the earth, as an acknowledgment that all these things were made, preserved, and bestowed on man by him; but he had no regard to *sin*, or the *way of deliverance* from it revealed in the first promise; but the faith of Abel was fixed on God, not only as a creator, but as a *redeemer* also; as he who, in infinite wisdom and grace, had appointed the way of redemption by sacrifice and atonement intimated in the first promise; wherefore, his faith was accompanied with a sense of sin and guilt, with his lost condition by the fall, and a trust in the way of redemption and recovery which God had provided; which he testified in the kind of his sacrifice, which was by *death* and *blood*; in the *one*, owning the death which he himself by reason of sin was obnoxious to; and in the *other*, the way of atonement, which was to be *blood*—the blood of the promised seed.

2. They differed in their *special nature and acts*, for the faith of Abel was saving, justifying, a principle of holy obedience, an effect of the Holy Spirit in his mind and heart; but that of Cain was a naked *barren assent* to the truths before mentioned, which is usually described under the name of a common and temporary faith; which is evident from the event, in that God never accepted his person, nor his offering.

And these are the things that still make the hidden difference between the professors of the same faith and

worship in general, whereof God alone is the judge, approving some and rejecting others; so from the foundation of the world the church was signally warned; that the *mere performance* of the outward duties of divine worship is not the rule of the acceptance of men's *persons* with God; but a distinction is made from the *inward principle* whence those duties proceed; yet the world will not receive a warning to this very day. Nothing is an higher provocation to carnal minds, than that the *same duties* should be accepted in some and rejected in others, only because the *persons* of the one, and not of the other, are accepted. Many have no greater quarrel at religion, than that God had respect to Abel and his offerings, and not to Cain and his.

§5. The first consequent of this faith in Abel is, that (δὲ ἧς) *by which*; that is, by which *faith*, (ἐμπιστήθη) *he was testified unto*; he obtained witness; even from God himself. And this was so famous in the church, that he seems to be commonly called by that name, "*the righteous Abel*," Mat. xxiii, 35. A *testimony* is *virtually* contained; "God (saith he) testifying of his gifts;" referring to these words in Moses, "The Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering;" he *testified*, in the approbation of his offering, that he had respect to his person; that is, he judged, esteemed, and accounted him righteous; for otherwise God is no respecter of persons; whomsoever God accepts, or respects, he testifieth him to be righteous, that is, to be justified and freely accepted with him: this Abel was by faith *antedecently* to his offering; for he was not made righteous, he was not justified, *by his sacrifice*; but therein "*shewed his faith by his works*;" and God by accepting his works of obedience, justified him (as he did Abraham) by works *declaratively*; he declared him to be so, by giving testimony to his gifts.



By what way God gave this testimony is not expressed; most suppose that it was by causing *fire to fall from heaven* to kindle and consume his sacrifice on the altar; certain it is, that it was by some *assured token* and pledge, whereby his own faith was strengthened, and Cain provoked; for God did that with respect to him and his offering, which he did not towards Cain and his; whereby both of them knew how things stood between God and them. As Esau knew that Jacob had gotten the blessing, which made him *resolve* to kill him; so Cain knew that Abel and his offering were accepted with God, whereon he *actually* slew him. And here we have the *prototype* of the believing and persecuting church in all ages; of them that are born after the Spirit, and those that are born after the flesh only. Then that began which the apostle affirms *still* to continue; "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now," Gal. iv, 29. This was the first visible acting of the enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; for "Cain was of the *wicked one*; (the seed of the serpent) and slew his brother," 1 John iii, 12; and it was a pledge and a representation of the death of Christ himself from the same principle.

§6. And (δι' αὐτῆς) *by it* (faith) he being dead yet speaketh; the original word (καλεῖται) being of a *middle* form, may be rendered either *he speaketh*, or *he is spoken of*; and accordingly is variously interpreted; for some take it for the *good fame* that Abel had in all generations; but it is not according to the mind of the apostle; for it is evident that he ascribes something *peculiar* to Abel, wherein others were not to be joined with him, but this of a good report is not so; but common to him with Noah, Abraham, and all the patriarchs; they were spoken of, and their praise celebrated in the

church, no less than Abel. The apostle plainly proceeds in representing the story concerning him, and what fell out after his death, as expressed by God himself; Gen. iv, 10, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground;" this is the *speaking* of Abel after his death, which is here intended, and this was *peculiar* to him; it is not affirmed of any one besides in scripture. Besides, the apostle interprets himself, Heb. xii, 24; where he directly ascribes this *speaking* to the "blood of Abel." And from this first instance, the apostle hath mightily confirmed his intention concerning the power and efficacy of faith, enabling men, with blessed success, to do and suffer according to the mind of God; and this example was of great force to convince the Hebrews, that if, indeed, they were true believers, as he supposed them to be, Heb. x, 39, *faith* would safely carry them through all the difficulties they had to conflict with in their profession, to the glory of God, and their own eternal salvation.

§7. (II.) Hence we may learn,

1. We are to serve God with the best we have; the best in our power; with the best of our spiritual abilities.

2. God approves not our duties, but where the principle of a *living faith* goes previously in their performance.

3. Our *persons* must be first justified, before our works of obedience can be accepted with God; for by that acceptance he testifies that we are *righteous*.

4. Those whom God approves, must expect that the world will disapprove of them, and ruin them if it can.

5. When there is difference in the hearts of men, on account of faith, there will, for the most part, be unavoidable differences about outward worship.

6. God's approbation is an abundant recompence for the loss of our very lives.

§8. 1. There is a voice in all innocent blood shed by violence; for there is an *appeal* in it from the injustice and cruelty of men, to God the righteous judge of all; and, of all cries, God gives the most open evidence that he hears it, and admit *of* the appeal. Hence most murders committed secretly are discovered, and most of those that are openly perpetrated, are, sooner or later, openly revenged by God himself; for his honor and glory are concerned to appear on the appeal made to his justice by innocent blood. Wherefore this voice, this *speaking* of blood, ariseth from the eternal law which God hath given mankind for the preservation of life from violence, the supreme conservation and guaranty of which he hath taken on himself, Gen. ix, 5, 6; to which we may add,

2. Whatever troubles *faith* may bring us to, in the *profession* of it, with *obedience* according to the mind of God, it will at last bring us safely out of them all, (yea, though we should die in the cause) to our eternal salvation and honor.

#### VERSE 5.

*By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

§1. Introduction. §2. (I.) Exposition. Enoch translated by faith. §3. His not seeing death. §4. Him not being found. §5. Because God took him. §6. Why ascribed to faith. §7. Probable conjectures. §8. How witnessed to before his translation. §9. (II.) Observations.

§1. **H**is second instance is Enoch; for he is the second man to whom *testimony* is personally and peculiarly given that he *pleased God*, and was accepted with him. This venerable patriarch was not only eminent for *faith and holiness*, Gen. v, 22, 24; but also

for what he *prophesied*, Jude, ver. 14, 15. It is probable that all the holy fathers before the flood were prophets and preachers, 2 Pet. ii, 5; in whose ministry the Spirit of God *strove with men*, which at the flood he put an end to, Gen. vi, 3. Yea, Christ by his Spirit, which was in his servants, 1 Pet. i, 11, preached repentance to them, before they were cast into their eternal prison, 1 Pet. i, 19; and these seem to have had a different ministry for the declaration of the whole counsel of God. Noah was a "preacher of *righteousness*," one who eminently proposed the righteousness of God through the promise, to encourage men to faith and repentance; he was, as we may say, emphatically a *gospel preacher*. And Enoch preached the "*threatenings* of the law," the future judgment, with the vengeance that would be taken on ungodly sinners, especially scoffers and persecutors, which is the substance of his prophecy or sermon recorded in the epistle of Jude.

§2. (1.) "By faith Enoch was translated," (μετετέθη) translated out of one state and condition into another. There are but two states of good men, such as Enoch was, from first to last:

1. The state of *faith and obedience* in this world, where Enoch lived three hundred years, and walked with God. To "walk with God," is to lead the life of faith in covenant obedience to him (ויתהלך) and he walked; the same word whereby God prescribeth covenant obedience to Abraham, (ויתהלך לפני) Gen. xvii, 1. The word in both places, in the same conjugation *Hithpael*, signifies a *continued walk up and down*, every way; and so to walk with God is, in all our ways, actions, and duties, to have a continual regard to God, by faith in his word, dependance on his grace, and submission to his will.

2. The state of *blessedness* in the enjoyment of God. No *other* state of good men is once intimated in scripture, or consistent with God's covenant; wherefore Enoch being *translated* from the one, was *immediately instated* in the other, as Elijah afterwards; his body was made in a *moment*, in the twinkling of an eye, incorrupt, spiritual, immortal, meet for the blessed habitation above. If any should ask why was Enoch not joined with Elijah, (who was afterwards in like manner translated) at his appearance with the Lord Christ, in his transfiguration, rather than Moses who *died*? Matt. xvij, 3. I would answer, it seems agreeable to the mind of God, that—the discourse which they then had with the Lord Jesus Christ, being about the accomplishment “of the *law* in his death”—Moses, who was the *lawgiver*, and Elijah, the most zealous *defender* of it, should be rather employed in that service, than Enoch, who was not so concerned.

§3. (Τὸ μὴ ἰδεῖν θάνατον) *that he should not see death*; or this was the *effect* of it, that he should not die. *Death* being the great object of *sensible* consideration, it is expressed by words of *sense*; *seeing* it, *tasting* it, and the like. And two things are intended:—that this translation was *without death*, or not by death: and,—he was freed from death by *eminent favor*. The great lawgiver put in an *exception* to the general sanction of the law, “that all sinners should die.” Death being in its own nature *penal*, as also destructive of our present constitution, in the dissolution of soul and body, an exemption from it was a signal instance of grace and favor.

And this was a divine testimony, that the body itself is also capable of eternal life. When all mankind saw that their bodies went into dust and corruption universally, it was not easy for them to believe that they

were *capable* of any other condition, but that the grave was to be their eternal habitation, according to the divine sentence on the entrance of sin; "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," Gen. iii, 19. But herein God gave us a *pledge* and assurance, that the *body* itself hath a *capacity* of eternal blessedness in heaven. But whereas this evidence of a capacity in the body to enjoy eternal life and blessedness, was confined to such as *never died*, it could not be a convincing pledge of the *resurrection* of bodies, over which death once had a dominion; this therefore was reserved for the resurrection of Christ.

§4. (Καὶ οὐ εὐρέθη) *and he was not found*. In the text of Moses it is only (וְאֵינֶנּוּ) *and he was not*; he went away, and was no more among men. Enoch was the principal *patriarch* then in the world, being, besides, a great preacher and prophet, the eyes of all were upon him. How God *took him* is not declared; whether there was any visible sign of it, as there was in the case of Elijah, (2 Kings ii, 11) is uncertain; but, doubtless, upon the disappearing of so great a person in the world, there was great inquiry after him. See 2 Kings ii, 16, 17. The apostle seems to intimate this as if he had said, "they made great search after him, but *he was not found*."

§5. The reason was (διότι μετέβηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ Θεός) *because God had translated him* into another state and condition; it was an act of God himself, his power and grace; and when he did not appear, when (οὐ εὐρέθη) *he was not found*, this was what satisfied all the godly; for there was *such evidence* as was sufficient security for their faith, relative to the important fact, although we know not at present what it was in particular; but the apostle doth not only declare the *truth* of the thing, but also that it was a *matter known*, and of use to the church in those days.

§6. This the apostle ascribes to his *faith*; "*by faith he was translated*;" that is, instrumentally, in that thereby he was brought into that state and condition, and so accepted with God, as that he was capable of so great a favor. But his being made an instance of this divine grace, for the edification of the church in all ages, was an act of *sovereignty* alone. And this is peculiar, and not unworthy of remark, respecting these two first instances of the power of faith; that the one was exposed by it to a *bloody death*, the other was delivered by it that he did *not die* at all.

§7. In the field of *conjectures* used on this occasion, I judge it *probable*—that his rapture was *visible* to many that feared God, who were to be *witnesses* of it to the world, that it might be his ordinance for the conviction of sinners, and the strengthening of the faith of the church, as also an exposition of the first promise;—that it was by the *ministry of angels*, like that of Elijah;—that he was carried immediately into heaven itself;—that he was made partaker of *all the glory* which was allotted to the heavenly state, before the ascension of Christ." I am also fully satisfied, from the prophecy of Enoch, recorded by the apostle Jude, that he had a great *contest* with the world about faith, obedience, and the worship of God, with the certainty of divine vengeance on ungodly sinners, and the eternal reward of the righteous. And as this *contest for God* against the world is exceedingly acceptable to him, which he manifested afterwards in his taking Elijah to himself, who had discharged his commission with a fiery (but divinely regulated) zeal; so, in this translation of Enoch upon the like contest, he "*visibly judged the cause on his side*," confirming his ministry, to the strengthening of believers, and the condemnation of the world. Wherefore, although it be a dream, that the

witnesses mentioned, Rev. xi, 3, 5, are Enoch and Elias personally, yet because their ministry is to bear testimony for God and Christ against the world, thereby plaguing and tormenting the men that dwell on the earth, ver. 10, as they also did, there may be an *allusion* to them and their ministry. Wherefore, there are two ways of confirming a ministry;—by suffering, as Abel did,—and by God's visibly owning them, as he did Enoch: and both these ways are to befall the *two witnesses*, first to be slain, and then taken up into heaven; first to suffer, and then to be exalted.

§8. "For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." These words are an entrance into the proof of the apostle's assertion, that it was *by faith* Enoch was translated, which he confirms in the next verse; he was translated *by faith* (πρὸ γὰρ τῆς μετεβαιῶστος) *for before that translation* he had walked with God three hundred years; but the apostle doth not say, that this was *testified* of him *before his translation*, as signifying the time of giving the testimony; for it was not given until many generations afterwards; and yet the testimony when given him concerned the time *before* his translation, Gen. v, 22, 24. That of "walking with God" in Moses, the apostle renders by (εὐηρεσθῆναι τῷ Θεῷ) *pleasing God*; for this alone is *well pleasing* to him; his *pleasure*, his delight is in them that fear him, and walk before him; and thus the apostle gives us the *whole sense* of the divine testimony. And we may again remark, that this also is peculiar to these two first instances, that they had an *especial testimony* from God, as to the acceptance of them and their services; and in them we have a representation in epitome of the state of the old world before the flood. There were two sorts of persons in it, believers and unbelievers; among these



there were differences about religion, and the worship of God; some of them were approved of God, and some were not, hence arose persecution; and the wicked, scoffing, persecuting world was threatened with predictions of judgments, and divine vengeance to come. God, in the mean time, exercised patience and long-suffering towards the disobedient, 1 Pet. iii, 20; yet not without some instances of his special favor towards *believers*; and thus it is at this day.

§9. (II.) From the above observe,

1. Whatever be the outward different events of faith in believers in this world, they are all alike accepted with God, and shall all equally enjoy the eternal inheritance.

2. God can and doth put a great difference as to outward things, between such as are equally accepted before him; Abel shall die, and Enoch shall be taken alive into heaven.

3. There is no service so acceptable to God, favored with pledges of his favor so signal, as a due and zealous opposition to the world in giving witness to his ways, his worship, and his kingdom, or the rule of Christ over all. And,

4. It is a part of our testimony to declare and witness, that vengeance is prepared for ungodly persecutors, and all sorts of impenitent sinners, however they may be provoked thereby.

5. The principal part of this testimony consists in our visible *walking with God* in holy obedience, according to the tenor of the covenant, 2 Pet. iii, 11—14.

6. As it is an effect of divine Wisdom to dispose the works of his providence, and the accomplishment of his promises, to an *ordinary* established rule declared in his word, which is the guidance of faith; so it is

sometimes to give *extraordinary instances*, both in the way of judgment, and of grace.

7. Faith in God, through Christ, hath an efficacy in procuring such mercy and favor, in particular, as it hath no *particular ground* to believe. Enoch was translated by faith; yet he did not *believe he should* be translated until he had a particular revelation of it; so there are many *particular mercies* which faith hath no word of promise to mix itself with; but yet, keeping itself within due bounds of trust and reliance on God, and acting by patience and prayer, it may be instrumental in procuring them.

8. They must walk with God here, who design to live with him hereafter; or they must please God in this world, who would be blessed with him in another.

9. *That faith* which can translate a man out of this world, can carry us through the difficulties we may meet with in the profession of faith and obedience in it. Herein lies the apostle's argument; and this latter the Lord Jesus Christ hath determined to be the lot and portion of his disciples; John xvii, 15, "I pray not thou shouldest take them out of the world, but shouldest keep them from the evil."

VERSE 6.

*But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him.*

§1. (I.) The apostle's argument. §2. All pleasing of God is by faith. §3. Coming to God, what. §4. What implied in believing that God is. §5. A rewarder. §6. (II.) Observations.

§1. (I.) **T**HERE being no direct mention made of *faith* in the testimony given to Enoch, but only that by *walking with God*, he *pleased* him, the apostle in this verse proves from thence that it was *by faith* he

pleased God, and consequently that thereby he obtained his translation. The *assertion* is,—That Enoch was translated *by faith*, which appears from his having a divine testimony that he *pleased* God; which he could not have without faith, as is evident from an acknowledged sacred maxim,—without faith it is impossible to please God—whence the conclusion follows, that if his *translation* was the effect of his *pleasing* God, it must be also of his *faith*. “Without faith it is impossible to please God;” that is, *faith* is the only way and means whereby any one may *please* God; or, *all pleasing* of God must be by faith, it being impossible it should be otherwise. The verb (*ευαρεσθῆναι*) is used only in this epistle, in these two verses, and chap. xiii, 16; in the passive voice, “God is well pleased.” The adjective (*ευαρίστος*) is used frequently, and is constantly applied to persons or things that are *accepted* with God, Rom. xii, 1, 2. Three things are included in our pleasing God:—that our *persons* be *accepted*,—that our *duties* please, and—that we have a testimony that we are *righteous*, or justified, as Abel and Enoch had, and as all true believers have in the scripture. This is that *pleasing* of God which is appropriated to *faith* alone; otherwise there may be many *acts and duties*, materially, with which God is pleased, and which he will reward in *this* world without faith; so was the destruction of the house of Ahab by Jehu.

§2. This pleasing of God is so “*by faith*,” as that without faith it *cannot be*, (*ἀδύνατον*) it is; *impossible*. Many, in all ages, have attempted to please God without faith. Cain began it, for his design in his offering was to please God; but he did it not by faith, and therefore failed in his design. And this is the great difference always in the visible church; all in their

divine worship profess a desire and hope to *please God*, else to what purpose do they serve him? But, as our apostle speaks, many of them "seek it not by faith," but by their own works and duties, Rom. ix, 32; those alone attain their end who seek it by faith, and therefore God frequently rejects the greatest multiplication of duties where that is wanting. Wherefore, saith the apostle, this is a *fundamental maxim* of religion, that—"it is impossible to please God any other way than by faith;" let men desire, and aim at it as long as they please, they shall never attain to it, for it is *impossible*, both from a *divine constitution*, and from the *nature* of the thing itself, faith being the first regular motion of the soul towards God. Nevertheless, so deeply rooted is this prejudice in the minds of men, that some have disputed with God himself, as if he dealt not equally and justly with them when he was not pleased with their duties, nor themselves; and the apprehension of this difference keeps up hatred, feuds, and persecutions in the visible church; lays the foundation of superstitious worship, and occasions innumerable controversies.

Wherefore, unless we hold fast this truth, that it is faith alone whereby we *please God*, and obtain acceptance with him, we condemn the generation of the righteous from the foundation of the world; and, may we not add, take part with Cain against Abel?

§3. "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is;" (προσερχομενον τω Θεω) *he that cometh to God*; this "*coming*" denotes an access of the person to the *favor* of God, including the particular *addresses* to him with his duties. And that access which makes faith so necessary, implies a previous sense of *want* in ourselves, by a *distance* from God. No man designs to come to God but for relief, satisfaction, and rest.

Now *faith alone* is the gracious power which takes us off from all confidence in ourselves, and directs us to look for all in another, in God himself; and therefore it must see *that* in God which is suited to give relief in this condition.

Again, there must be antecedently some *encouragement* given to him that will come to God, and that from God himself; which can be nothing but his free gracious promise to *receive* them who come to him by Christ, grounded on a *divine revelation*; which revelation itself, in reality, hath in it the nature of a *promise*; for the reception of which, *faith* is indispensably necessary; this is what the apostle makes it his design to prove in a great part of the chapter.

§4. It is the duty of those who have this design of coming to God, (*πίστεύειν*) to *believe*; for this is the only appointed way of attaining that end; whence *believing* itself is often called “coming to God,” or “coming to Christ,” Isa. lv, 1, 3; John vi, 37, 44; vii, 37; the first thing to be believed is, (*ὅτι ἐστὶ*) *that God is*; the expression seems to be elliptical, something more being intended than the *divine being*, absolutely; even as “*his God*.” The apostle speaks not here of any such assent to the truth of the being and existence of God as may be attained by *reason*, or the light of nature, but that which is the true object of *faith*; and it is such a believing of the being of God, as gives *encouragement* “to come to him.” And that apprehension which men may have of the being of God by the light of nature, and even of his being a rewarder, Cain had, as we have shewn, and yet he had no share in that faith which the apostle here requires; wherefore, it is evident from the context, the circumstance of the subject treated of, and the design of the apostle, that the object of faith here intended is

—the divine nature with its glorious properties, as engaged, and acting themselves in a way of giving rest, satisfaction, and blessedness to them who come unto him.

When we are obliged to believe "*that he is,*" it is what he proposeth when he declareth himself by the name, I AM, Exod. iii, 14; whereby he did not only signify his *existence* absolutely, but also that he *so was*, as that he would actually give existence and accomplishment to all his promises to the church; so when he revealed himself to Abraham by the name of "Almighty God," Gen. xvii, 1, he was not obliged to believe merely his "eternal power and godhead," which may be known by the light of nature, Rom. i, 20; but also that he would be *so to him*, in exerting his Almighty power on his behalf; whereon he requires of him that he should "walk before him and be perfect;" wherefore the believing that *God is*, according to the text, is to believe him as *our God in covenant*, exercising the holy properties of his nature, power, wisdom, goodness, grace, and the like, in a way of giving rest and blessedness to our souls. For to suppose that the apostle intends by that *faith* whereby we may come to God, and find acceptance with him, nothing but an assent to the *being of God absolutely* considered, which is altogether fruitless in the generality of mankind, is a vain notion unsuited to his design.

§5. "And (μισθαποδοῦνς γινέσται) *that he is*, or *will be* a reward of them that diligently seek them;" that is, he will act in all things towards them suitably to the proposal which he makes of himself to faith, when he says, I AM, or I AM GOD ALMIGHTY, or the like. God is a *rewarder* to them that seek him, in that he himself is their *reward*; which eternally ex-

cludes all thoughts of *merit* in them that are rewarded; for who can merit God to be his reward? Is not this an act of infinite grace and bounty? And the proposal of this (O stupendous reward!) is that alone, which gives *encouragement* to come unto him, and which the apostle designs to declare.

This farther appears from the limitation: "them who diligently seek him;" for (*ἐκζητεῖν*) the word here used, argues a peculiar manner of *seeking*; whence we render it *diligently seek* him. To *seek* God, implies a *rule*, guiding us as to the *way* we are to go, and *what* we are to expect; those that sought him without such a rule, did but strive (*ψιλαφῆσαι*) to *feel after* him, as men feel after a thing in the dark; when they know neither *what* it is, nor *how* to come at it.

And what can this rule be, but the rule of God's covenant with us, and the revelation made of himself therein? Again, this diligent seeking of God is an access to him by faith, initial and progressive, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, that we may find favor and acceptance.

§6. (II.) Hence we may *observe*,

1. When God hath put an *impossibility* upon any thing, it is in vain for men to attempt it; from the days of Cain multitudes have been designing to please God without faith, all in vain; like them that would have builded a tower, whose top should reach to heaven.

2. It is of the highest importance to examine well into the sincerity of our faith, whether it be of the true kind or no; seeing thereon depends the acceptance of our persons and our duties. None ever thought that God was to be pleased without any faith at all; for the very design of pleasing God avows some kind of faith; but that *special* kind of faith whereby we may be justified, they regard not.

3. God himself in his self sufficiency, and all sufficiency, being thereby meet to act towards poor sinners in a way of bounty, is the first motive or *encouragement* to faith.

4. Those who seek God only according to the *light of nature*, do but feel after him in the dark, and they shall never find him such a rewarder as here described, whatever notions they may have of his justice, rewards, and punishments.

5. Those who seek him according to the *law of works*, and by the best of their obedience to it, shall never find him as a rewarder, nor attain what they seek after; see Rom. ix, 31, 32.

6. It is the most proper act of faith to come and cleave to God as a *rewarder*, by way of grace and bounty, as proposing *himself* for our Redeemer.

7. That faith is vain, which doth not put men in a diligent inquiry after God.

8. The whole issue of our finding God when we seek him, depends on our *way and rule* in so doing.

#### VERSE 7.

*By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

§1. Introduction. Noah. §2. Warned of God. §3. Obeyed. §4. Prepared an ark. §5. To the saving of his house. §6. Condemned the world. §7. Became heir of the righteousness of faith. §8, 9. (II.) Observations.

§1. (I.) **N**OAH is the third person mentioned in the scripture, to whom *testimony* was given in particular that he was *righteous*; and therefore the apostle produceth him in the *third place*, as an instance of the power and efficacy of faith, declaring also wherein his faith wrought, and was effectual. The application of



this example was exceedingly proper and seasonable to these Hebrews, who stood now on their *trial* of what they would follow and abide by, faith or unbelief; for here they might see, as in a glass, what would be the effect of the one and the other. Noah being designed of God for a work uncommonly important, to live and act at that time wherein God would *destroy the world* for sin, he had his name given him by a spirit of prophecy. His father Lamech called him (נֹחַ) *Noah*, for, said he, (וְנֹחַ יִנְחֵם) *this shall comfort us* concerning our work and toil of our hand, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed, Gen. v, 29. He foresaw that by him, in his days, relief would come from the curse; which was done—partly, in the just destruction of the wicked world, wherein the earth for a while had rest from its bondage under which it groaned, Rom. viii, 22;—and partly, that in him the promise of the blessed seed should be preserved, whence proceed all rest and comfort; as to his state and condition antecedent to what is here declared of him; it is affirmed in his history, that he “*found grace* in the eyes of the Lord,” Gen. vi, 8; and that he was “*just*, perfect in his generation, and *walked with God*,” ver. 9; he was accepted with God, justified, and walked in acceptable obedience, before he was thus divinely warned.

As to his employment in the world, he was, “a preacher of righteousness,” 2 Pet. ii, 5; that is, of the righteousness of God by faith; and of righteousness by repentance and obedience among men. There is no doubt but that before, and whilst he was building the ark, he was urgent with mankind in calling them to repentance, by declaring the *promises and threatenings* of God; and, oh, what a blessed state and employment! to be a preacher of righteousness to others, and an heir of righteousness himself!

He is said to be (*ογδονς*, 2 Pet. ii, 5,) *the eighth person*; because he was the head of the eight that were saved, the other seven depending on him, and saved by him; unless we shall suppose him to be called the *eighth preacher* of righteousness, that is, from Enoch, when the separation was first made between the wicked and the godly, and, wickedness increasing, those who feared God began publicly to preach repentance, Gen. iv, 26.

§2. "Being (*κηρυχθενης*) *warned of God* of things not seen as yet." The word (*κηρυαλιζω*) properly denotes, to *give an answer* with authority, by kings or magistrates, to ambassadors or orators; and passively is used in scripture for *called* or *named*; but its more frequent use is for a *divine warning*, Matt. ii, 12—22; and the substantive (*κηρυαλισμος*) is a *divine oracle*, Rom. ix, 4; and it is used to express any kind of *divine revelation*, as by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, Luke ii, 26; by the ministry of angels, Acts x, 22; by dreams, Matt. ii, 12—22; or by an immediate voice of God, Rom. ix, 4. And *this* warning of God is no other but that which is recorded, Gen. vi, 13, &c. and there were two parts of it; the first *minatory*, or a declaration of the purpose of God to destroy the whole world, ver. 13. The second *directory*, shewing what he required of him in making an ark, ver. 14, &c. accordingly it had a twofold effect on Noah; *fear* from the threatening, and *obedience* in building the ark according to direction.

Both parts of this divine warning were "of things not yet seen;" wherefore it was a *pure act of faith* in Noah to believe what he had no evidence for but by divine revelation; especially considering, that the thing revealed was in itself strange, direful, and to human reason incredible.

§3. In consequence of this *warning*, the first part of which was a threatening of total destruction, faithful Noah (εὐλαβηθεὶς) *was moved with fear*; a reverential fear of God's threatenings, and not an anxious, solicitous fear of the evil threatened. His believing the word of God had this effect on him; in the warning given him he considered the greatness, holiness, and power of God, with the vengeance becoming those holy properties of his nature which he threatened to bring on the world; this fear, which arose from faith, was used by the same faith to stir him up to duty; and therefore this *reverential fear* of God is frequently in scripture used for the whole worship of God, and all the obedience required of us; because it is a continual motive to it, and a means of a due performance of it.

§4. (Κατεσκευασε κιβωτον) "*he prepared an ark.*" The preparing of this vessel, or any thing like it, to swim on the water, was a thing new on the earth, a marvellous work, requiring great labor, expense, and time, commonly supposed an hundred and twenty years; and a strange thing, no doubt, it was in the world, to see a man with so great an endeavor building a *ship* where there was no *water* near him. During this preparation he continued to *preach righteousness* and repentance to the inhabitants of the world; and doubtless, he let them know in *what way* they should be destroyed if they did not repent, and which the preparing of an *ark* so clearly implied: but the inhabitants of the old world were *disobedient*; they did not repent, they did not return to God upon his preaching, 1 Pet. iii, 19, 20; for which cause they were not only temporally destroyed, but shut up in the *everlasting prison*: and all the time of warning they were *secure*, not being moved with his threatening to the last hour; Matt. xxiv, 38, 39, "They knew not until the flood came and took

them away." Nay, on the contrary, they were *scoffers*, 2 Pet. iii, 3—6; they scorned and derided Noah both in his preaching and building.

§5. The immediate happy effect of this faith of Noah, and the fruits of it in fear and obedience, was "the saving (*τὴν οὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος*) of his house," family, or household; including *himself*, his *wife*, his *three sons*, and their *wives*; that is, such as, on the foresight of the flood, they had *espoused*; for probably they came not together in conjugal duties till after the flood, for they had no child until then, Gen. x, 1; and the persons saved were *eight* only.

This *family* God in sovereign grace and mercy would preserve, principally to continue the conveyance of the promised seed, which was to be produced from Adam, Luke iii, 38; and which was not, by virtue of the immutable counsel of God, liable to an intercession. And in this saving of the family of Noah by the ark, we have a figure of God's preserving a remnant in all ages, when desolating judgments have destroyed apostatized churches and nations; so the apostle Peter declares with respect to the vengeance and overwhelming destruction that was coming on the apostatized church of the Jews; 1 Pet. iii, 21, 22, "The ark wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water; the like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us." I deny not but that there is a great analogy in general between salvation by the *ark* and that by *baptism*, inasmuch as the one did *represent* and the other doth *exhibit* Christ himself. But the apostle had a particular design in this comparison; for judgment by an universal destruction was then coming on the whole church and people of the Jews, but God would save a few by *baptism*, that is, their *initiation* into gospel faith and repentance, wherein they were *separated*

from the perishing infidels, and were really and actually delivered from the destruction that befell them, as Noah and his family were in the ark.

§6. (Κατέκρινε τον κόσμον) *he condemned the world*; not as a judge of it, properly and authoritatively, but as an *advocate* and a *witness*, by plea and testimony. He condemned it by his doctrine, obedience, example, and faith; he cleared and justified God in his threatenings and the execution of them, and therein “condemned the world” as guilty and justly deserving the punishment inflicted on them: he “condemned the world” by casting a weighty aggravation on its guilt, in that he believed and obeyed when they refused to do so. It was not any thing evil, grievous, or impossible, that was required of them, but what he gave them an example of in himself, which greatly aggravated their sin: he “condemned the world” by leaving it utterly without excuse; he that takes away the principal plea that a guilty person can make in his own defence, may be justly said to condemn him; and this Noah did towards the old world: he left them no pretence that they had not been *warned* of their sin and approaching ruin; so that they had nothing to plead for themselves why the execution of judgments was respited for one moment:—finally, he “condemned the world” by approving of the vengeance that befell them, though very severe; so shall the saints judge and condemn fallen angels at the last day, 1 Cor. vi, 3.

§7. The last thing is, “that he became heir (της καὶ πιστὴν δικαιοσύνης) *of the righteousness which is by faith*.” What is the righteousness here intended is fully declared by the apostle in all his other writings; he calls it sometimes the “righteousness of God” absolutely; sometimes “the righteousness of God which is by faith;” sometimes “the gift of righteousness which

is by Christ;" sometimes "the righteousness of faith," or the "righteousness which is by faith," as here: in all which our free gratuitous justification by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through believing is intended. This Noah obtained *by faith*; for that in this faith of the patriarchs no respect was had to Christ and his righteousness, is such a putid figment, so destructive of the first promise and all true faith in the church of old, so inconsistent with and contrary to the design of the apostle, and utterly destroying the whole force of his argument, that it deserves no consideration.

The way whereby he obtained this righteousness is, that (εγγελο κληρονομός) *he was made the heir of it*. Noah was the "heir of the righteousness which is by faith;" in that by free adoption through faith he came to have an interest in the righteousness which is tendered in the promise, whereby it is conveyed to us as an *inheritance*. And whereas it is said that he "*became*" so, if respect be had to his faith in building the ark, the meaning is, that he was then *evidenced* and declared to be so; as Abraham was said to be *justified* when he offered Isaac, who was personally justified long before: so also was Noah by the testimony of God himself, before he was warned to build an ark.

§8. (II.) We may from hence make some *observations*:

1. It is an high commendation of faith, to believe things on the word of God, though in themselves, and as to all second causes, invisible, and seemingly impossible, Rom. iv, 17—19.

2. No obstacle can stand in the way of faith when it fixeth itself on the almighty power of God and his infinite veracity, Rom. xi, 23; Tit. i, 2.

3. It is a great encouragement and strengthening to faith, when the things believed, as promised or threat-

ened, are suitable to the properties of the divine nature; righteousness, holiness, goodness, and the like; such as it became God to do, such was the destruction of the world, when it was filled with wickedness and violence.

4. We have here a pledge of a certain accomplishment of all divine threatenings against ungodly sinners and enemies of the church, though the time of it may be yet far distant, and the means of it inevident.

5. A reverential fear of God, as threatening vengeance on impenitent sinners, is a fruit of saving faith, and acceptable to God, see chap. iv, 1.

6. It is one thing to fear God, as threatening, with an holy reverence; another to be afraid of the evil threatened merely as it is penal and destructive; which the worst of men cannot avoid.

7. Faith produces various effects in the minds of believers, according to the variety of objects fixed on; sometimes joy and confidence, sometimes fear and reverence.

8. Then is fear a fruit of faith, when it engageth us to diligence in our duty; thus Noah, being moved by fear, prepared an ark. How commendable his faith! Neither the difficulty nor length of the work itself, nor his want of success in preaching, as to the repentance of his hearers and their conversion to God, nor the contempt and scorn which were cast upon him by the whole world, discouraged him from going on with the work and duty to which he was divinely called.

9. When the preaching of righteousness loseth its efficacy in the conversion of sinners, it is a token of approaching desolations, Rev. xviii, 7, 8.

§9. 1. The visible professing church shall never fall into such an apostasy, nor be so totally destroyed, but

that God will preserve a remnant for a seed to future generations, Isa. vi, 11—13; Rom. ix, 27; Rev. xviii, 4.

2. Those whom God calleth to, fitteth for, and employeth in any work, are therein (*συνεργοὶ Θεοῦ*) *coworkers with God*, 1 Cor. iii, 9; 2 Cor. vi, 1. So as that what God doth himself efficiently, is ascribed to them instrumentally, as working with him and for him. So the preachers of the word *save* men, 1 Tim. iv, 16; and are said to *condemn* them.

3. Let those who are employed in the declaration of God's promises and threatenings, take heed to themselves to answer the will of him by whom they are employed. It ought to be a motive to exemplary diligence and obedience, that therein we bear testimony for God against the impenitent world, which he will judge and punish.

4. All right to spiritual privileges and mercies is by gratuitous adoption.

5. The righteousness of faith is the best inheritance; for thereby we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

#### VERSE 8.

*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

¶ I. Introduction and connexion. §2. (I.) Abraham. His call. §3. Two parts of it. §4. Where to. §5. Commendation of his faith. §6—8. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle hath now passed through the first period of scripture records—from the beginning of the world to the flood; and therein hath considered the examples of all concerning whom it is testified in particular, that they *pleased God*, and were accepted with him in their obedience; and hath shewn that they *all*



*pleased God*, and were righteous by *faith*; and their faith was *effectual* to secure them in that state of divine favor by enabling them for all duties of obedience, notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions they met with. Hereby he makes good his design with respect to these Hebrews, *viz.* to convince them that if they did not persevere in their profession, it was because of their *unbelief*, seeing true faith would certainly carry them through with constancy and perseverance, whatever difficulties they should meet with. Hence he proceeds to the *next period*, (extending from the renovation of the world in the family of Noah to the giving of the law) to manifest, that in every state of the church the way of pleasing God was one and the same; as, also, that faith still retained its efficacy under all economical alterations.

He who, in *this period* of time, is first testified unto in the scriptures is Abraham; on whose example, by reason of the eminency of his person, the relation of the Hebrews to him, (deriving from him all their *privileges*, temporal and spiritual) the efficacy of his faith, with the various successful exercises of it, he declares at large from hence to the end of the eighteenth verse.

§2. (I.) Designing to give many and illustrious instances of the power and efficacy of the faith of Abraham, the apostle begins with that which was the beginning and foundation of them all, *viz.* the call of God and his compliance. True faith acts itself in *obedience* to all the commands of God; this alone is that faith which the apostle celebrates, and to which he ascribes the great effect of pleasing God.

"By faith Abraham, when he was (*καλεμενος*) *called*," that is, of God, by an immediate word of command from him. He did not leave all his present satisfactions, and put himself on innumerable hazards for the

future, merely of his own accord. Had he not a *divine call*, there had been no such work for *faith*. Where there is no *call* from God, there can be no trust in God. Where the call is general, as in our ordinary concerns, so is our faith in God; it resigns all circumstances into his disposal; but this special call of Abraham required a special faith. It is particularly recorded, Gen. xii, 1; which took place immediately after the death of Terah.

§9. Of this call of Abraham there were two parts:— a *command*; Gen. xii, 2, “Get thee out of thy country,” &c. and a *promise*, ver. 3; and I will make, &c. The promise included a temporal blessing in the multiplication of his seed, ver. 2; and a spiritual blessing in confirming the promised seed to him and his family, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. And it is a thing most absurd, and contrary to the whole design of scripture, and the dispensation of the covenant, to confine the faith of Abraham to the *land of Canaan*, and the glory of his posterity therein. For the life of the promise, on his call, whereby his faith was animated, was in the “*blessing of all the families of the earth in him*,” which was in *Christ alone*, the promised seed, as all but infidels must confess.

The apostle takes notice only of the *first part* of the calls, (*καλεμενος εξηλθειν*) he was called to go out, so our translation; or, being called (*επεκυσεν εξηλθειν*) he obeyed to go out, as they lie in the original; they are both to the same purpose. In the latter way, *obeyed* is immediately referred to faith; in the former *going out* is so; his faith wrought by obedience in his going out; Gen. xii, 1, “*Get thee (ⲓⲧⲓⲧⲓ vade tibi)* out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house,” leave and forsake all thy pleasant, useful, desirable things on earth; these three things, *country, kindred,*

and *father's house*, comprise them all. Whereas, therefore, *natural affection* and *sense of usefulness* are the two cords that powerfully bind us to these things, the forsaking of them must needs proceed from some great cause and efficacious impulse. This, therefore, commends the *faith* of Abraham, in the first place, and evinceth the powerful efficacy of faith in general; that under its conduct, in obedience to the call of God, he could relinquish all these things, cast their insinuations out of his affections, and break the cords of delight and interest.

§4. Yet he was not called to forsake this place where he was, and then left to rove and wander up and down *uncertainly*; but was called (*εις τον τονν*) to a *certain place*. It so falls out many times, that men—grown weary by one means or other, (as convictions or afflictions) of their natural state, so as to have a mind to relinquish it, yet having no discovery of a *better state*, with rest in Christ by the gospel—rove up and down in their minds and affections for a season, and then perish in their wanderings, or return to the place from which they come out. This did not the patriarchs. And he is said to *receive* it: it was given him by way of a free *donation*; and so it is with respect to all good things betwixt God and us; he is the free donor of them, we are but passive recipients. (*Εις κληρονομιαν*) for an *inheritance*. To an *inheritance* there is required *right and title*, that a man may be a lawful possessor of it. Now this country was before possessed by others, who enjoyed it by a prescription from its first plantation. But God, as the great possessor of heaven and earth, as the sovereign Lord of all things, transferred their right and title, and vested it in Abraham. So it is frequently remarked, “God gave them this or that land.”

§5. The last thing in the words is, the commendation.

tion of Abraham's faith from his unacquaintedness with the place whither he was to go upon the call of God. He had only said to him, that he should "go into a land that he would shew him," Gen. xii. It should seem, indeed, that God had told him from the beginning, it was the land of Canaan he designed; for when he first left Ur of the Chaldees, he directed his course towards Canaan, Gen. xi, 31; but yet it is said he *knew it not*. He did not understand any thing of the *circumstances* of it, what in that land he was called to, nor where it was; so that it may be well said, that "he went whither he knew not." The sum is, that he wholly committed himself to the power, faithfulness, goodness, and good conduct of God, without the least encouragement from a prospect of the place whither he was going.

All these things being put together—what he was called from, what he was called to, his readiness in obedience, the ground of his whole undertaking, which was the call of God, which he received and obeyed by faith—here is not only an eminent instance of his *faith* recorded, but an invincible encouragement given to those Hebrews, and to us, that faith is able to carry us through all the difficulties of our profession, unto the full enjoyment of the promise. This I look upon as a *second instance* of the faith of Abraham, wherein it was signally exemplary: he did not only, on the first call of God, through a view of his greatness and sovereign authority, *forego* all he had, but *engage* himself to absolute obedience, without any prospect what it might cost him; and is not the same required of us?

§6. (II.) We may now *observe*,

1. It becomes the infinite greatness and all-satisfactory goodness of God, at the first revelation of himself unto any of his creatures, to require of them a renunciation of all other things, and their interests in them, in compliance with his commands. *Get thee away* from

country, friends, relations, and enjoyments, is a command becoming the greatness of God. "I am the Lord thy God," is the first word to us; and the next is, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me;" with me, before me, besides me; nothing to be in my place; in comparison of me, in competition with me; forsake all and be mine only. Unless we have a sense of that greatness of God, making such commands to *become* him; we yield no obedience to him in a due manner:

2. The power of sovereign grace in calling men to God, and the power of faith complying with it, is mightily efficacious. Whilst Abraham lived with his father on the other side of the river, "they served other gods;" Josh. xxiv, 2, or were engaged in the superstition and idolatry then prevalent in the world. And the minds of men being once thoroughly infected with them, as having received them by tradition from their fathers, are very hardly recovered from their snares. In this state he had all worldly accommodations that his own country and kindred could afford him; yet, such was the powerful efficacy of sovereign grace in his call, that it enabled him, by faith, to relinquish all; and to betake himself, at once, into a new state and condition, as to things temporal and eternal. It is well if all of us, who make profession of the same faith, have an experience of the same grace.

3. It is the call of God alone that makes a distinction amongst mankind, as to faith, obedience, and their effects. Abraham thus believed and obeyed God, because he was *called*; and he was called, not because he was better or wiser than others, but because it pleased God to call him, and not others, 1 Cor. i, 31—36.

4. The church of believers consists of those that are called out of the world. The call of Abraham is a pattern of the call of the church, Psal. xlv, 10; 2 Cor. vi, 17, 18.

5. Self-denial, in fact, or resolution, is the foundation of all sincere profession: this Abraham began his profession with, and proceeded to the noblest instances. The instruction our Savior gives herein, Matt. x, 37, 38, and xvi, 24, 25, amounts but to this: if you intend to have the faith of Abraham, with the fruits and blessings attending it, you must lay the foundation of it in self-denial, and the relinquishment of all things, if called to it, as he did. Wherefore, the faith of Abraham being every where in scripture set up as the measure and standard of the faith of believers in all ages, and the apostle in this place giving us an account of the beginning and progress of it for our example, there is nothing that belongs more directly to the exposition of the place, than a due observation of its nature, actings, and effects for our instruction, without which the mind of the Holy Ghost in the context is not understood, though expositors take very little notice of these things. Now the foundation of it is laid in this,—That the first act of saving faith consists in the discovery of the infinite greatness, goodness, and other excellencies of the divine nature, so as to judge it our duty, upon his call, his command, and promise, to deny ourselves, and to relinquish all things; and then, as occasion offers, to do so accordingly.

§7. 1. There is no claim of right, title, or possession, that can stand against the righteousness of God in the disposal of all inheritances here below at his pleasure. Whatever single persons, whatever whole nations, may think or boast of their title and right, as to God they are all but tenants at will; he can disinherit and dispossess them of all, as he seems good: and when he will do so, (of which he gives instances in all ages) no plea will be admitted against his right, or the exercise of it. So do kings hold their crowns, nations their soil, and private men their possessions.

2. God's grant of things to any is the best of titles, and most sure against all pretences and impeachments; Judges xi, 24, "We will possess what the Lord our God gives us to possess."

3. *Possession* belongs to an inheritance enjoyed. This God gave to Abraham in his posterity, with a mighty hand and stretched out arm; and he divided it unto them by lot.

4. An inheritance is capable of a limited season. So was it with *this inheritance*; for although it is called an *everlasting inheritance*, yet it was so only because it was *typical* of that heavenly inheritance which is properly eternal; and because as to *right and title* it was to be continued to the end of that *limited perpetuity* which God granted to the church state in that land; that is, to the coming of the promised seed, in whom all nations should be blessed; which the call and faith of Abraham principally regarded. Many incursions were made upon it, but they who made them were punished for their usurpation; yet when the grant of it to them expired, and those wicked tenants of God's vineyard forfeited their right to it by their unbelief, and murdering the *true heir*; God *disinherited* them, dispossessed them, and left them neither right nor interest in this inheritance as at this day. It is no more the *inheritance of Abraham*; but in Christ he is become *heir of the world*, and his spiritual posterity enjoy all the privileges of it. Nor have the present Jews any more *title* to the land of Canaan, than to any other country in the world. Nor shall their title be renewed upon their conversion to God; for their right was limited to that time wherein it was *typical* of the heavenly inheritance; that now ceasing for ever, there can be no special title to it revived.

§8. Hence we may infer,

1. That it is *faith* alone gives the soul the satisfaction in future rewards, in the midst of present difficulties and distresses. So it did to Abraham, who, in the whole course of his pilgrimage, attained nothing of this promised inheritance. And,

2. The *assurance* given us by divine promises, is sufficient to encourage us to the most difficult course of obedience.

## VERSE 9.

*By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.*

§1—3. Exposition of the words. §4. The matter contained in them. §5. (I.) The internal principle of Abraham's pilgrimage. §6. (II.) The external part of it. §7. (III.) Observations.

§1. **H**AVING declared the foundation of Abraham's faith, and given the first signal instance of it, he proceeds to declare *his progress* in its exercise:

(Παρωκησεν) *he sojourned*; the original word (παρωκησεν, *commoror*) signifies *to abide as a stranger*. Luke xxiv, 18; Σὺ μόνον παροιμεῖς “*Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem?*” A *sojourner* there for a season, not an inhabitant in the place? Wherefore *he abode as a stranger*, not as a free denison of the place; not as an inheritor, for he had no inheritance, not a foot breadth in that place, Acts vii, 5. Not as a constant inhabitant or *house-dweller*, but as a stranger that moved up and down as he had occasion. “In the land of promise;” (εἰς τὴν γῆν for ἐν τῇ γῇ, בארץ) *in the land*; see Acts vii, 6, “The land (εἰς ἣν ὑμεῖς νῦν κατοικεῖτε) *wherein you now dwell*.” And from the use of the Hebrew particle (כ) the Greek preposition (εἰς) is frequently put for the other (ἐν) in the New Testament, and the reverse. Wherefore not the *removal* of Abraham in that land which he had mentioned in the foregoing verse, but



his *abode as a stranger*, a foreigner, a pilgrim in it, is intended; and this was the land (της επαγγελιας) of *promise*; that is, which God had newly promised to give him, and wherein all the other promises were to be accomplished.

He sojourned in this place (ως αλλοτριον) *as in a strange land*. He built no house in it, purchased no inheritance but only a burying place; he entered, indeed, into leagues of peace and amity with some, Gen. xiv, 13; but it was not as one that had any thing of his own in the land. He reckoned that land at present no more *his own* than any other land in the world, no more than Egypt was the land of his posterity when they sojourned there, which God had said, was *not theirs*, Gen. xv, 13.

§2. The manner of his sojourning in this land was that (εν σκηναις κατοικησας) *he dwelt in tabernacles*. It was no unusual thing in those days, and in those parts of the world, for whole nations to dwell in such habitations. Why Abraham was satisfied with this kind of life, the apostle declares in the next verse; and he is said to dwell in *tabernacles*, or tents, because the largeness of his family required more than one, Gen. xxiv, 67; xxxi, 33; and with respect to their *moveable* conditions in these tents, God in an especial manner, was said to be their dwelling place, Psal. xc, 1.

§3. "With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." It is evident that Abraham lived until Jacob was sixteen or eighteen years old; and therefore may be said to live *with him*, as to the time they both lived; but there is no need to confine it to the same *time*; the sameness of *condition* only seems to be intended; for as Abraham was a sojourner in the land of Canaan without any inheritance or possession, living in tents; so it was also with Isaac and Jacob,

and with them alone; Jacob was the last of his posterity who lived as a *sojourner* in Canaan; all those after him lived in Egypt, and came not into Canaan until they took *possession* of it for themselves.

And they were (τῶν συγγληρονόμων τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῆς αὐτοῦ) *heirs with him of the same promise*; for not only did they *inherit* the promise as made to Abraham, but God distinctly renewed the *same promise* to them both; Gen. xxvi, 24; xxviii, 13—15. So were they heirs with him of the very same promise, Psal. cv, 9—11.

§4. The sense of the words being declared, we may yet farther consider the matter contained in them. We have here an account of the life of Abraham after his call;—as to the internal principle of it, being a life of *faith*; and—as to the external manner of it, being a *pilgrimage*. “By faith he sojourned.”

§5. (I.) As to the internal principle, it was a *life of faith*.

1. It had respect to things spiritual and eternal; for its *foundation and object*, he had the promise of the *blessed seed*, and the spiritual blessing of all nations in him; which was a confirmation of the first fundamental promise of the church concerning the “seed of the woman that was to break the serpent’s head.” And God entered *expressly* into covenant with him, confirming it with the seal of *circumcision*, wherein he obliged himself to be his God, his God Almighty, and all-sufficient, for his temporal and eternal good. To suppose that Abraham saw nothing in this promise and covenant but things confined to *this life*—nothing of spiritual grace, nothing of eternal reward or glory—is so contrary to the analogy of faith, and to express testimony; so destructive of all the foundations of religion, so unworthy of the nature and properties of

God; rendering Abraham's *title* "the Father of the faithful," and his *example* in believing so useless, that it is a wonder men of any tolerable sobriety should indulge to such an imagination.

2. It was a *life of faith* with respect to things *temporal* also; for as he was a sojourner in a strange land, without friends, or relations, not incorporated in any political society, or dwelling in any city, he was exposed to danger, oppression, and violence, as is usual in such cases; besides, those amongst whom he sojourned were for the most part wicked and evil men, such as, being fallen into *idolatry*, were apt to be provoked against him for his profession of faith in the most High God. Hence, on some occurrences of his life, that might give them advantage, it is observed, as a matter of *danger*, "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land," Gen. xiii, 7; and xii, 6; chap. xx, 2; moreover, he had sundry particular trials wherein he apprehended that his life was in imminent danger, Gen. xii, 11—13; xx, 2; but in all these dangers, being helpless in himself, he lived in the continual exercise of faith and trust in God, his power, all-sufficiency, and faithfulness. Hereof his whole history is full of instances, and his faith in them is frequently celebrated.

In things of both sorts, spiritual and temporal, he lived by *faith*, in a *constant resignation of himself* to the sovereign will and pleasure of God, when he saw no way or means for the accomplishment of the promise; so it was with respect to the long season that he lived without a child, and under the command he had to offer him for a sacrifice, when he had received him; on all these accounts he was the father, the *example* of believers in all generations.

§6. (II.) For the *external part* or manner of his life, it was a *pilgrimage*, a sojourning. Two things

constitute such a state of life;—that a man be in a *strange country*;—that he have no *fixed habitation* of his own; a man may want a *habitation* of his own as his inheritance, and yet, being in his own country, not be a pilgrim; and a man may be in a strange country, and yet having a fixed habitation of his own therein, he may not be a pilgrim; but when both these concur, there is a state of pilgrimage. And so it was with Abraham; he was in a strange land, though the land of promise; for having no interest in it, no relation, no possession, no inheritance, it was to him a *strange land*; wherefore, he had nothing, to trust to, but Divine protection alone.

§7. (III.) And we may *observe*,

1. That where faith enables men to live to God, as to their eternal concerns, it will enable them to trust him in all the difficulties and hazards of this life. To pretend a trust in God as to our souls and invisible things, and not resign our *temporal* affairs with patience and quietness to his disposal, is a vain pretence; and we may take hence an eminent trial of our faith; too many *deceive* themselves with a *presumption* of faith in the promises of God, as to things future and eternal; for if they are brought into any temporal trial, they seem utter strangers to the life of faith. It was not so with Abraham, his faith acted itself uniformly with respect to the *providences* as well as the *promises* of God. Wherefore,

2. If we design to have an interest in the blessings of Abraham, we must walk in the steps of his faith; and to this end is justly required—a firm affiance in the promises for grace, mercy, and eternal salvation, trust in his providence for preservation and protection in this world, with a cheerful resignation of all our temporal and eternal concerns into his disposal, accord-

ing to the tenor of the covenant. Is not the faith of most professors lame and halt in these parts and duties of it?

3. Where faith is once duly fixed on the promises, it will wait patiently under trials, afflictions, and temptations, for their full accomplishment, see the Exposition on chap. vi, 12, 15.

4. Faith discerning aright the glory of spiritual promises will make the soul of a believer contented and well satisfied with the smallest portion of earthly enjoyments.

#### VERSE 10.

*For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

§1. Introduction. §2. (I.) What the city Abraham looked for. §3—5. (II.) What included in the description of it. §6. (III.) Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle abundantly indicates in this discourse, that Abraham was very well satisfied with his condition as a stranger and pilgrim in the world, and now he proceeds to declare the grounds and reasons of that satisfaction; he knows that his portion did not lie in things here below, but he looked for things of another nature, which by this means were to be obtained; for it is the *end* that regulates our judgment concerning the means. Let us briefly inquire,

I. What the city is, which he looked for?

II. What is included in the description of it?

§2. "For he looked for a city;" (*την πολιν*) *that city*; the article prefixed denoting an eminency. Jerusalem, saith Grotius, and he so interprets the words, as if Abraham hoped that his posterity should have in the land of promise a city that God would prepare them in a special manner.

1. This is expressly contrary to the exposition given by the apostle himself of this expression, ver. 16.

2. It is not suitable to God's dealing with Abraham, and to the nature and effects of the holy patriarch's faith, that he should have nothing to encourage him in his pilgrimage, but an hope that after many generations his posterity should have a city to dwell in, in the land of Canaan, wherein the condition of most of them was not better than his in tents?

3. The sense of that expression, "whose builder and maker is God," is the same with chap. viii, 2; "which the Lord pitched, and not man."

4. To suppose that this was only an earthly city, not to be possessed by his posterity until eight hundred years afterwards, and that but for a limited time, is utterly to overthrow his faith; the nature of the covenant of God with him, and his being an *example* to gospel believers, as he is here proposed to be.

This city, therefore, which Abraham looked for, is that *heavenly city*, that everlasting mansion which God hath provided and prepared for all true believers with himself after this life, ver. 16; it is also sometimes called a *tabernacle*, sometimes an *house*, sometimes a *mansion*, 2 Cor. v, i; Luke xvi, 9; John xiv, 2; it being the place of their everlasting abode, rest, and refreshment; and herein is comprised the whole reward and glory of heaven in the enjoyment of God; with the expectation hereof did Abraham and the following patriarchs support, refresh, and satisfy themselves in the midst of all the toil and labor of their pilgrimage.

§3. (II.) As to the description of this city, the *first* part is taken from the *nature* of it, being such as (τῶν θεμελίων ἐχούσαν) *hath foundations*. It is generally granted that here is an opposition to *tents* or *tabernacles*, (in which Abraham sojourned) which *had no*

*foundation*, being supported only by stakes and cords; but the *special nature* of the foundation of this city is intended, in comparison of which the foundations of other cities laid in stone and mortar are none at all; for experience manifests how temporary and subject to ruin they all are; but *these foundations* are such as give perpetuity, yea, eternity, to the *superstructure*, even all that are built upon them; wherefore these foundations are the eternal *power*, the infinite *wisdom*, and immutable *counsel* of God. On these is the *heavenly city* founded and established; the purpose of God in his wisdom, and power to make the heavenly state of believers immutable and eternal, subject to no change, is the immoveable foundation of the city we look for by faith.

§4. The *second* part of the description is from the *maker* and *builder* of it—"God." Most expositors judge that both the words here used are of the same signification; and indeed the difference between them is not material, if there be any; properly the one is (*τεχνίτης artifex*) he who in building projecteth and designeth the whole frame and fabric; that regularly disposeth of it according to the rules of art; and the other is (*δημιουργός conditor*) the *builder* or maker; that is, he whose the whole work is, at whose charge, and for whose service it is made.

*Between* these two, the (architect and proprietor) there are in *other* buildings those who actually labor in the work itself, the *workmen*; there is nothing said of them; for this building is erected by a mere word of infinite and sovereign power, without labor or toil;—*Let it be so, and it was so*; wherefore, God alone is the only contriver and erector of the heavenly city, without the least concurrence of other agents, without the least use of any instrument;—in short, it is the

*habitation of God* himself, with all that enjoy his presence, and the *polity* which is suited to it. Oh, desirable abode! Oh, ineffable effect of infinite wisdom, power, and grace!

§5. Of this city it is said that Abraham by faith (*ἐξεδέχετο*) *looked for it*; that is, he *believed*. eternal rest with God in heaven, wherewith he comfortably and constantly sustained the trouble of his pilgrimage; 2 Cor. iv, 16, 17, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." This is a full description of the faith of Abraham, in the operation and effect here ascribed to it by the apostle; and herein it is exemplary and encouraging to all believers under their present trials and sufferings, which is the apostle's present design.

§6. (III.) Hence *observe* the ensuing particulars,

1. A certain expectation of the heavenly reward grounded on the promises and covenant of God, is sufficient to support and encourage the souls of believers under all their trials in the whole course of their obedience.

2. Heaven is a settled, quiet habitation. How suitable a dwelling then for them who have a life of trouble, and little but trouble in this world!

3. All stability, all perpetuity in every state here and hereafter, ariseth from the purpose of God.

4. This is that which recommends to us the city of God, the heavenly state, that it is as the work of God alone, so the principal effect of his wisdom and power.



5. A constant expectation of eternal reward argues a vigorous exercise of faith, and a sedulous attendance upon all the duties of obedience; for without these it will not be raised nor preserved, 2 Cor. iv, 16, 17; 1 John, iii, 1—3.

## VERSE 11.

*Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age; because she judged him faithful who had promised.*

§1. Transition and connexion. §2. (I.) Exposition. Sarah. §3. Remarks on her faith. §4. The effects, and §5. Foundation of it. §6. (II.) Observations.

§1. **H**ERE he proceeds to the instances of his faith with respect to the *promise* made him, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And these also are two;—that which concerneth the birth of Isaac, by whom the promise was to have its accomplishment; and—what he did by faith in *offering up* the son of the promise at the command of God.

In the first of these, Abraham was not alone, but *Sarah* his wife was both naturally and spiritually no less concerned than himself. Wherefore the apostle in the midst of his discourse concerning Abraham and his faith, in this one instance introduceth Sarah, with great propriety, in conjunction with him.

§2. (*Kai autē Sarah*) *and, or also, Sarah herself*; as Abraham was the *father* of the faithful, or the church, so she was the *mother* of it, so as that the distinct mention of her faith was necessary. She was the free woman from whence the church sprung, Gal. iv, 22, 23; and all believing women are her daughters, 1 Pet. iii, 6; see Gen. xvii, 16. Her working and obedience is proposed to the church as an example, and therefore her faith also may justly be so; 1 Pet. iii, 5, 6; besides, she was equally concerned in the divine revelation with Abraham, and was as sensible of great difficulties in its ac-

complishment as Abraham, if not more; to which we may add, that the blessing of the promised seed was confined and appropriated to Sarah no less than to Abraham; Gen. xvii, 16, "I will bless her, yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations." Herein her faith was necessary, and is here honorably recorded.

§3. Something may be remarked in the very proposing of this instance;

1. It is the *faith of a woman* that is celebrated. Hence *that sex* may learn, that they also may be *examples* of faith to the whole church, as Sarah was; and it is necessary for their *encouragement*, because of the special concernment of their sex in the first entrance of sin; because of their natural weakness, subject in a peculiar manner to various temptations, which in this example they are encouraged to conflict with and overcome by faith. Whence it is that they are heirs, together with their believing husbands, of the grace of life, 1 Pet. iii, 7.

2. Here is a single commendation of the faith of Sarah, even in that very instance wherein it was *shaken*; yea, being awakened by reproof, Gen. xviii, 13, 14; and receiving a fuller evidence that it was the Lord who spoke to her, she recovered herself, and rested by faith in his power and truth.

3. The carriage of Sarah is twice repeated by the Holy Ghost, here and 1 Pet. iii, 6, and in *both places* only what was *good*—her *faith* towards God on her recovery after the reproof, and her observance of her husband, whom, speaking to himself, she called *Lord*—is mentioned and proposed without the least remembrance of her failing or miscarriage; and such will be the judgment of Christ at the last day, concerning all those whose faith and obedience are *sincere*, though accompanied with many failings.

§4. "She received strength;" (ελαβε) *she received* it; she had it in a way of free gift; (δυναμιν) *strength*, power, and ability. I believe that this was not a mere *miraculous generation*, but that she received a general restoration of her nature for its primitive operations, which was before decayed; as Abraham afterwards, who, after his body was in a manner dead, received strength to have many children by Keturah; (Εκ καταβολην σπέρματος) *to conceive seed*, a child, in a natural way and manner; she conceived and accordingly bore a son, Gen. xxii, 2.

That which is eminent herein, manifesting that it was a mere *effect of faith*, is, that it was thus with her (παρὰ καιρον ηλικίας) *after the season of age was past*. So the apostle expounds that passage in Moses, "Sarah was old and well stricken in age, and it ceased to be with her after the manner of women," Gen. xviii, 11, 12. She was ninety years old at that time, Gen. xvii, 17; and this at first shook her faith, for want of a due consideration of the omnipotency of God; "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Gen. xviii, 14. She considered not, that where divine veracity was engaged by promise, infinite power would be also engaged to make it good.

§5. "Because she judged him faithful who had promised;" (επει, quoniam) *because*; signifying the reason of what was before asserted; (ηγησατο) *she judged*; she reckoned, esteemed, reputed him to be so. And herein the nature of true faith in general doth consist, viz. in "the mind's judging and determining upon the evidence proposed;" when she recollected herself, and took off her mind from the thing promised to the special object of her faith; (τον επαγγελλομενον) *the promiser*, who was God himself, faith prevailed; she then came to this resolution—whatever difficulties or oppositions lie in

the way of accomplishing the promise, he who made it is *able* to remove them all; and she farther concluded, on the surest grounds, that he *would* make good his word wherein he had caused her to put her trust; "because she judged him who had promised (*πιστοῦν*) *faithful*." Is any thing too hard for the Lord?

§6. (I.) From this account of Sarah's faith *observe*;

1. Faith may be sorely shaken and tossed with difficulties, at their appearance, lying in the way of the promise, which yet at last it shall overcome; sometimes the weakness of faith ariseth to a distrust of the event of promises, or their accomplishment, because of the difficulties that lie in the way, Luke i, 18—20. So was it with Sarah on this occasion, for which she was reproved; and this at times is found in us all. It is therefore our duty to watch that our faith be not surprised, or shaken by the appearance of difficulties and opposition; and not to despond utterly on account of any partial failure, for it is in its very nature, by the use of means, to recover its vigor and efficacy.

2. It is no defect in faith not to expect events and blessings absolutely above the use of means, unless we have a *particular warranty* for it; as Sarah had in this case.

3. The duty and use of faith about *temporal mercies* are to be regulated by the *general rules* of the word where no *special providence* makes the application of a promise.

4. The mercy here spoken of concerning a son to Abraham by Sarah his wife was absolutely decreed, and absolutely promised; yet God indispensably requires faith in them for the fulfilling of that decree and the accomplishment of that promise.

5. That the *formal object* of faith in the divine promises is—not the things promised in the first place,

but—*God himself* in his essential excellencies of truth or faithfulness and power. To fix our minds on the things themselves promised, to have an expectation or supposition of the enjoyment of them, (suppose mercy, grace, pardon, glory,) without a previous acquiescency of mind in the truth and faithfulness of God, or on God himself, as faithful and able to accomplish them, is but a deceiving imagination.

6. Every promise of God hath this consideration tacitly annexed to it, “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” There is no divine promise, when it comes to the trial, as to our closing with it, but we apprehend as great a difficulty and improbability of its accomplishment to us, as Sarah did of this. Poor, humbled, broken souls, burdened with sins, and entangled in their own darkness, find insuperable difficulties, as they apprehend, in the way of accomplishing the promises. But—“is any thing too hard for the Lord?”

7. Although the veracity and faithfulness of God be in a peculiar manner the *immediate* object of our faith, yet it takes in the consideration of all other divine excellencies for its encouragement and corroboration; and all of them together are that *name* of God, whereon a believing soul stays itself in all extremities, Isa. i, 10. And,

8. This is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; that is, the righteousness of Christ as tendered in the promise, is made known and communicated from the faith of God therein to the faith of them by whom it is believed.

## VERSE 12.

*Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore, innumerable.*

§1. Connexion. §2, 3. (I.) Exposition. The fruit of Abraham's faith. §4. His numerous posterity. §5. (II.) Observations.

§1. **I**N this verse we have an illustration of the *fruit of faith* by an eminent consequent of it,—the innumerable posterity of Abraham; and, indeed, this may be called the *gratuitous remuneration* of faith, although it be not added particularly, that it was by “faith.” For it was expressly contained in the promise to Abraham, which he “received by faith.” Wherefore the *belief* thereof belonged to that faith of Abraham for which he is commended; and it had its peculiar difficulties also, that rendered it both acceptable and commendable. For whereas he himself had but one son by virtue of the promise, it was not easy for him to apprehend how he should have such an *innumerable* posterity. And it may be observed, that the first testimony given to the *justification* of Abraham by faith, was upon his belief of this part of the promise, that “his seed should be as the stars of heaven, that cannot be numbered;” for it is immediately added, that “he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness,” Gen. xv, 5, 6. For although this promise concerned things temporal, yet it *belonged* to the way of redemption by Christ, the promised seed; so that *justifying faith* may act itself, and be an *evidence* of our justification, when we believe promises even about temporal mercies, as they belong to the covenant; whereof we have innumerable examples under the Old Testament.

§2. (I.) "Therefore sprang," &c. The note of inference (*διό*) *therefore*, respects not a consequence in the way of reasoning, but the introduction of *another matter*; also the particle (*καί*) *and*, in the original is not conjunctive, but *emphatical* only. The blessing here declared as a fruit of faith is a *numerous posterity*; not only had Abraham and Sarah one son upon their believing, but by him a numerous, yea, an *innumerable posterity*.

But it may be inquired, whence this should be such a *blessing*, as to be celebrated amongst the most eminent fruits of faith, and as the subject of a solemn divine promise? I answer, because the whole church of God, the true worshippers of him under the Old Testament, was *confined* to the *posterity* of Abraham; therefore was their multiplication a singular blessing, which all the faithful prayed for, and rejoiced in. So is it stated by Moses, Deut. i, 10, 11, "The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and behold you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you as he hath promised you."

§3. "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead." The root of this numerous posterity is but one—Abraham. Unto *him alone* was the great promise of the *blessing seed* now *confined*, and yet he was heir of all the promises. Of *him as good as dead*, Rom. iv, 19, (*σώμα ἤδη νεκρωμένον*) "his body being now dead," brought towards death, made impotent by age, being about an hundred years old.

§4. "So many as the stars of the sky in number;" (*τα ὡς τὰ ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*) *the stars of heaven*. This expression was first used by God himself, who commanded Abraham to go out, or brought him forth abroad, and

bad him look towards heaven, and *tell the stars*, if he were able to number them. Now it is evident, that in a *naked view* of them, and without the rules of art, (as they were shewn to Abraham) there can be no greater appearance of what is absolutely *intnumerable*. Besides, I judge that in this comparison not only their *number*, but also their *beauty* and *order* are respected.

In the *other allusion* they are declared to be absolutely innumerable. It is not said, that they shall be "*as many as the sand by the sea-shore*," but *as innnumerable*. To which the event wonderfully corresponded. And hence proceeded the miraculous multiplication of the posterity of Jacob in Egypt; for, from *seventy-five* persons, sprang, in little more than *two hundred years*, *six hundred thousand men*, besides women and children.

§5. (II.) Here *observe*,

1. When God is pleased to increase his church in number, it is on various accounts a matter of rejoicing to all believers; and a subject of their daily prayers, as what is frequently promised in the word of truth.

2. God oftentimes by nature works things above the power of nature in its efficacy and operations. By weak and dead means he often produceth mighty effects.

3. Whatever difficulties lie in the way of accomplishing the promises under the New Testament made to Jesus Christ, concerning the increase and stability of his church and kingdom, they shall have an assured accomplishment.

#### VERSE 13.

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises; but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

VOL. IV.

23



§1. Introduction. §2 (I.) Exposition. All die in faith. §3. Not having received the promises. §4. But having seen them afar off: §5. And were persuaded of them. §6. And embraced them. §7. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. §8. (II.) Observations.

§1. **B**ECAUSE there was somewhat *peculiar* in these instances, compared with those before recounted, and those which follow after; namely, their *pilgrim state* after the call of Abraham; the apostle diverts to what they did, attained, and professed in that state.

§2 (I.) "All these died in faith;" (*αυτοι παντες*) *all these*; that is, all those who left their own country on the special command of God, living as pilgrims in the land of Canaan, and elsewhere, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. This is evident from what follows, (ver. 13—15; *απεθανον καλα πιστιν*) *died in faith*; there is no doubt but that the apostle commends their faith from its *perseverance* unto the end; but there is also intended, that they died in the *exercise* of faith, a firm belief of a *substantial existence* after this life; a *resignation* and trust of their departing souls into the care and power of God; the belief of a future state of *blessedness and rest*, here called an heavenly country, a city prepared for them by God; faith of the *resurrection of their bodies* after death, that their entire persons which had undergone the pilgrimage of this life might be stated in eternal rest. For, on this their dying in faith, God after death "was not ashamed to be called their God," ver. 16. Whence our Savior proves the resurrection of the body, Matt. xxii, 32.

§3. (*Μη λαβοντες τας επαγγελιας*) *not having received the promises*. It is granted, that the promises are here taken for the *things promised*; for, as to the promises themselves, they saw them, they were persuaded of them, they embraced them; wherefore it cannot be said that they received them not. And of

Abraham it is said expressly, that he *did receive* the promises, ver. 17; as also that all other believers under the Old Testament did *obtain them*, ver. 83.

Again, the *promises* in the plural number is the same with the *promise* in the singular, ver. 33. For the promise intended was but one; but whereas it is *frequently renewed*, it is called the “promises;” as also because of the manifold *occasional additions* that were made to it, and declaratory of it.

This promise is no other but that of the actual exhibition of Christ in the flesh, with all the privileges of the church thereby, which the apostle had so fully insisted on, chap. vii—x. This was that *better thing* which God provided for us under the New Testament, that they without us should not be made perfect, ver. 40.

§4. But (πορρωθεν αυλας ιδοντες) *having seen them afar off*; at a great distance of time. This farther makes it evident, that the *things promised*, and not the promises themselves, are intended; for the promises were not *afar off* but present with them. They *saw* them; *understood* in general the mind of God in the promises, and had the *idea* of the things promised in their minds. They saw them as a map, wherein was drawn the scheme of divine wisdom, goodness, and grace, for their deliverance from the state of sin and misery; but at *such a distance* as that they could not clearly discern the things themselves. And this is the first act of faith with respect to divine promises; a discerning or understanding of the goodness, wisdom, love, and grace of God in them, suited to our deliverance and salvation. And this I take to be intended in this expression, “they *saw* them.”

§5. “And were (πεισθεντες) *persuaded* of them;” fully or certainly persuaded of them, as the word is fre-

quently used, denoting the *satisfactory acquiescence* of the mind in the truth of God as to their accomplishment. For when we discern the excellency of the things contained in them, the next inquiry is after an *assurance* of our participation of them. And herein, on the part of God, his *truth* and veracity represent themselves to us, Tit. i, 2. Hence arises a *firm persuasion* of mind concerning their accomplishment. And to confirm this persuasion, God in infinite condescension, confirmed his promise and his truth to Abraham with his oath, chap. vi, 12—18. Hereon they were assuredly persuaded, that they were not empty flourishes, *mere* promises, or subject to any disappointment; but, notwithstanding their great distance, and the intervenience of all sorts of difficulties, they should certainly be accomplished in their appointed time, Isa. ix, 22.

§6. On this persuasion they (*απασαμενοι*) *embraced* them. The word signifies to *salute*, and is applied to such salutations as are accompanied with delight and veneration; and because it is usually expressed by stretching out the hands to receive and embrace, it is used also for *to embrace*, which is here the most proper sense of it. Wherefore this embracing of the promises, is the heart's cleaving to them with love, delight, and complacency, which, if it be not a proper act of faith, yet it is an inseparable fruit. This was the faith whereby the elders obtained a good report, and not a mere naked, barren assent to divine revelation, which is all that some will allow to it.

§7. "And confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth;" (*ομολογησαντες*) *they confessed*, avowedly professed, that their interest was not in this world; but they had such a satisfactory portion in the promises which they embraced, that they openly de-

clared, they were (*ξένοι και παρεκιδήμοι*) *strangers and pilgrims* on the earth. *Rest*, or home, is the perfection of our nature; and it was originally intrusted with powers for the attaining of it; but by sin these powers are lost, and the end is no more by them attainable; yet we cannot but continue still to seek after it; and most men look for it in this world, in this life. This, therefore, is their *home*, their country, their city of habitation. But these believers professed that this was not their rest, they did but wander about in the world for a season. Abraham made this profession, Gen. xxiii, 4; and Jacob, Gen. xli, 8, 9; and David, 1 Chron. xxix, 15; Psal. xxxix, 12; and that all believers are such, the apostle Peter declares, 1 Epis. ii, 11.

If we distinguish these two sorts, (*ξένοι*) *strangers* are such as are always moving, having no abiding place at all; such was the state of our Lord Jesus Christ during his ministry, where he had not to lay his head; and (*παρεκιδήμοι*) *pilgrims*, are such as take up an abode for a season, without an intermixture with the rights, duties, or privileges of the place where they are.

This they are said to be (*ἐκ τῆς γῆς*) *on the earth*, during their whole continuance in this world. And an intimation is given of that *other* state which they looked for, and wherein their interest lay, which is heaven.

§8. (II.) Hence *observe*,

1. It is the glory of true faith that it will not leave them in whom it is, that it will not cease its actings for their support and comfort in their dying moments; when the hope of the hypocrite shall perish.

2. The life of faith eminently manifests itself in death, when all other reliefs and supports fail.

3. That is the crowning act of faith, the great trial of its vigor and wisdom,—what it doth in *our dying*.

4. Hence it is, that many of the saints, both of old and of late, have evidenced the most triumphant actings of faith in the approach of death.

5. The due understanding of the whole Old Testament, with the nature of the faith and obedience of all the saints under it, depends on this one truth—that they believed things that were not yet actually exhibited nor enjoyed. This is the line of life and truth, that runs through all their profession and duties. Christ in the promise, even before his coming, was the life of the church in all ages.

6. God would have the church from the beginning of the world to live on promises not actually accomplished. For although we do enjoy the accomplishment of the great promise of the incarnation of the Son of God, yet the church continues still to live on promises, which in this world cannot be perfectly fulfilled.

7. We may receive the promises as to the comfort and benefit of them, when we do not actually receive the things promised.

8. As our privileges in the enjoyment of the promises are above theirs under the Old Testament, so our faith, thankfulness, and obedience ought to excel theirs also.

9. No distance of time or place can weaken faith as to the accomplishment of divine promises. There are still left us upon record, some promises that are, it may be, afar off; such as those which concern the destruction of antichrist, and the glory of the kingdom of Christ in the latter days. The rule of faith concerning them is given us, Heb. ii, 3, 4.

10. Quiet waiting for the accomplishment of prom-

ises at a great distance, and which most probably will not be in our days, is an eminent fruit of faith. He that believeth will not make haste.

11. This firm persuasion of the truth of God in the accomplishment of his promises to us, upon a discovery of their worth and excellency, is the second act of faith, wherein the life of it doth principally consist.

12. This avowed renunciation of all other things besides Christ in the promise, and the good will of God in him, as to the repose of any trust or confidence in them for our rest and satisfaction, is an eminent act of that faith whereby we walk with God; Jer. iii, 23; Hos. xiv, 3, 4.

VERSE 14.

*For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.*

§1. The words an inference from their foregoing account; the exposition. §2. Obs. 1. The proper way of interpreting Scripture is to consider the words themselves, with relation to the persons speaking, and all their circumstances. §3. 2. Some Scripture proofs are uncontrollably evident only from a due regard to peculiar circumstances.

§1. FROM the profession of these patriarchs, that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, the apostle makes an inference from what is contained therein.

“For they that say such things,” &c. (Οἱ γὰρ) *for they*, be they who they will, *that speak such things as these* sincerely; or, these persons in their circumstances saying such things, as recorded in scripture (εὐφραίνεσθαι) *declare plainly*; they make it manifest to all, that they did seek a country, or “a city for themselves,” as the Syriac expresseth it; (ἐκζητεῖσθαι) *they diligently inquired* after it, as the word signifies. There is an entrance in these words on a train of evident

consequences. From their profession he concludes that they desired a country; and if they did so, it must be either that from whence they came, or some other: that from whence they came it could not be, for the reason he assigns; and if some other, it must be a better than either that from whence they came, or that where they were; which could be no other but an heavenly country, that is, *heaven itself*.

§2. *Obs.* 1. This is the genuine and proper way of interpreting scripture; when, from the words themselves, considered with relation to the persons speaking them, and all their circumstances, we declare what was their determinate mind and sense. And on the due apprehension of the literal sense of the words themselves, the studious exercise of reason, in all proper ways of arguing, is required.

§3. *Obs.* 2. The inference of the apostle from these words of the patriarchs is so *evident* and uncontrollable, that he affirms *themselves to declare plainly*, what he declares to be their sense contained in their words. And indeed, take the words precisely, without a consideration of the *mind* wherewith, the *circumstances* in which, and for what *end* they were spoken, they do not express any peculiar act or fruit of faith. For the very heathen had an apprehension that this life is but a kind of pilgrimage. But under *their circumstances*, there must be another sense in the words. For they speak them not as the common condition of mankind, but as their peculiar portion in the world, with respect to the promises of God. Most men meet with, and are sensible of sundry wants; yet they are such as may be supplied in the place where they are; and their great desire with their utmost endeavor is, that they may be *here* supplied. Such persons, be they never so poor, so indigent, so harborless, are not

*pilgrims* on the earth; this is their *home*, although they are but ordinarily provided for. Much less are they so who have an affluence of all things to their satisfaction, though they sometimes meet with a pinch or loss. They *only* are so, who live always in a sense of such wants as this world cannot supply.

VERSE 15.

*And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

§1. The words an answer to an objection that might be raised. §2. The objection fully answered. §3. Observations.

§1. **W**HEREAS these patriarchs thus expressed their desire of a country, and diligently sought after it, was it not because they had lost their *own country*, their relations and enjoyments? Was it not, because of the difficulties of a wandering course of life, a desire to return home again, where they might have quiet habitations? No; for,

§2. 1. They *had a country* of their own, to which they might have gone; *Ur* of the Chaldees, Gen. xi, 32; called also Mesopotamia, Acts vii, 2; Gen. xxiv, 10; the country on the other side of the flood, Josh. xxiv, 2.

2. They departed from it upon the command of God, and not for want, nor to increase their riches; nor were they driven out by external force or persecution, but went in an obediential compliance with the call of God; and this secured them from all desires of a return.

3. In their profession of being strangers and pilgrims, they had not respect to this country; for (*ἐμνημονεύον*) *if they had been mindful*; that is, remembered it with a mind and desire after it, they might



have had an opportunity of returning. It is natural for all men to remember and desire their own country; nothing is more celebrated among the ancients, nor more illustrated by examples, than the love of men to their own country, and their fervent desire after it.

But this love, this desire after their native country, was mortified in these holy persons by faith, acting in obedience to the call of God; so that no remembrance of their first enjoyments, no impressions from their native air and soil, no bonds of consanguinity among the people, nor difficulties they met with in their wanderings, could kindle in them any peculiar love and attachment to their native place. "They minded it not." Besides,

4. That they had not respect to *this country*, in the profession they made, the apostle proves from hence, that they might have returned to it, if they had been desirous of it. If this were their object, why should they thus complain, when they might have *gone home* when they would?

(Εἶχον αὐ καί ποτε) *they might have had an opportunity*; or, as some copies read, only (εἶχον) *they had*, which better expresseth the mind of the apostle; for not only they *might have had*, but they really had sundry *opportunities* of returning. For from the call of Abraham to the death of Jacob there were two hundred years; so that they had *time enough* for a return if they had had a mind to it; there was no external *difficulty* in their way by force or opposition; the *way* was not so *far*, but that Abraham sent his servant thither out of Canaan; and Jacob went the same journey with his staff. But they gave sundry evidences also that they *would not*, on any opportunity, return thither, Gen. xxiv, 5, 6; and therefore it could not be that with respect to which they professed

themselves to be *strangers* and *pilgrims*; that was not the country which they sought and desired.

§3. Hence *observe*:

1. It is in the true nature of faith to mortify not only corrupt and sinful lusts, but our natural affections and inclinations, though in themselves innocent, if they are any way uncompliant with duties of obedience to the commands of God. Yea, herein lies the principal trial of the sincerity and power of faith. Our lives, parents, wives, children, houses, possessions, our country, are the principal, proper, lawful objects of our *natural* affections. But when any of them stand in the way of God's command, if they are hindrances to the doing or suffering any thing according to his will, faith does not only mortify, and take off that love, but gives us a comparative hatred of them, Matt. x, 37; Luke xiv, 26; John xii, 25.

2. When the hearts and minds of believers are fixed on things spiritual and heavenly, it will take them off from inordinate cleaving to things otherwise greatly desirable.

VERSE 16.

*But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.*

§1. Connexion and Design. The subject stated. §2. First, what their faith was exercised in. §3, 4. Secondly, the consequent of it. §5. Thirdly, the ground and evidence of their privilege. §6. Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle here draws another inference wherein he expresseth the real object of their faith and desires, with the great advantage and dignity which they obtained therein.

“But now,” &c. Here we see what was the acting of their faith in that confession they made, that they

were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For it was not a mere *complaint* of their state and condition; nor a desire after any other earthly country; but it must be a country of another sort that they desired and fixed their faith upon, "that is an heavenly."

There are three things in the words,

1. What their faith was exercised in, under the profession which they made; they "desired a better country, that is, an heavenly."

2. What was the consequent thereof; "God is not ashamed to be called their God."

3. The ground and evidence of that professed relation; for he hath prepared for them a city."

§2. *First*, (*ορεγουσαι*) "*they desire a better*" in the midst of the world, and against the world, which contemns things future and invisible in comparison of those which are of present enjoyment, they lived in a desire and expectation of a future, invisible, heavenly country. And in this profession, testimony is borne to the truth and excellency of divine promises.

(*Νυν*) *now*, is here an *illative* particle; and joined with (*δε*) *but*, signifies an adversative inference; they desired not a return into their country, *but* they desired an heavenly; they had an earnest active desire, which put them on all due ways and means to attain it. Slothful unactive desires after things spiritual and heavenly, are of little use to the souls of men. And this kind of *earnest desire* includes a *sense of want* and dissatisfaction in things present; *just apprehension* of the worth and excellency of the things desired; a sight of the way and means whereby it may be attained, without which all desire will quickly fade and fail. Such a desire in any is an evidence of faith working in a due manner.

That which they thus desired was (*κρείττονος*) *a better*

country. Was it a country better in *degrees*, with better air, better soil; more fruitful, more peaceable? No; but a country of *another kind*, that is, an *heavenly*.

He had before declared, that they looked for "a city that had foundations, whose framer and builder is God," ver. 10. Here he expresseth where and what that city is, *viz. heaven itself*, or an habitation with God in the everlasting enjoyment of him. ■

The apostle here clearly ascribeth to the holy patriarchs a faith of *immortality and glory* after this life, and that in heaven above, with God himself, who prepared it for them; whereas if we believe the papists, they were deceived in their expectation, and fell into a *limbus* they know not where. Again, if our inspired author proves not that their faith wrought in ~~the~~ desire and expectation of *heavenly things*, he proves nothing at all to his purpose. Or shall we think, that those who were testified unto, that they lived by faith, walked with God, gave themselves continually to prayer and meditation, denied themselves as to all worldly accommodations, and whose faith produced inimitable instances of obedience, rose no higher in their faith, hope, desire, and expectations, than to those *earthly things*, wherein their posterity were to have no share, comparable to that which many of the worst enemies of God possessed; the whole of it being at this day one of the most contemptible provinces of the *Turkish* empire? I no way doubt, but on the promise of the blessed seed, they lived in that faith of heaven and glory, which some that oppose their faith were never acquainted with.

§3. *Secondly*, The consequent or effect of their faith, acting itself in their earnest desires of an heavenly country, is, that "God is not ashamed of being called *their God*." He doth not say, that he *would be* their

God, for that he was absolutely in the first call of Abraham; but that he would be so *called*, he would take that name and title to himself; so the word signifies, (*ἐπικαλεῖσθαι*, not *vocari*, but *cognominari*.) And the apostle respects what is recorded Exod. iii, 6—15. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial to all generations." He assumes to himself this *title*, whereby he will be known and called on as by his *own name*. And this was the greatest honor that they could be made partakers of. He who is the greatest possessor of heaven and earth, the God of the whole world, of all nations and of all creatures, would be known, *styled*, and *called on* as their God in a peculiar manner, and distinguisheth himself thereby from all false gods whatever. It is true, he hath revealed himself to us by a far greater and more glorious name; he hath taken another title to himself, to the manifestation of his own glory, and the comfort of his church far above it; namely, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Nevertheless, by reason of the covenant made with them, he is yet known by this name; and whilst it stands upon record, there is yet hope of their posterity being recovered from their present forlorn, undone condition.

§4. (*Οὐκ ἐπαισχυνεῖται*) *he was not ashamed* to be so called; to take that name upon himself. And sundry things are intimated in this expression; as,

1. *Infinite condescension*. Though it seem to be a thing infinitely beneath his glorious majesty, yet he is not ashamed of it. It is a condescension in God to behold the things that are done in heaven and earth," Psalm cxiii, 5, 6. How much more doth he so humble himself in taking this title on him!

2. That it would be to him a matter of *reproach*. Innumerable gods were set up in opposition to him; all agreed to reproach and despise the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, three poor pilgrims on the earth. Whilst those idols multiplied to themselves great swelling titles of vanity, their best conceptions of him were, that he was "the *unknown God*." But notwithstanding all the reproaches and contempt of the world, God was not *ashamed* of them, nor of the title which he had assumed to himself; nor did he lay it aside till he had famished all the gods of the earth, and vindicated his own glorious being and power. But,

3. It is usual in such negative enunciations to include the contrary positive. So the apostle affirms that he was not *ashamed* of the gospel of Christ, Rom. i, 16; that is, he *gloried* in it, or the faith and knowledge of it was his honor, as he every where expressed himself. So God took this title to himself as his *honor* and glory. If it be asked, how it could be any glory to God? I answer; it was in virtue of this title, and to fill it up, he glorified his grace, his goodness, his truth, and power, above all he did besides in the world. He will be for a "crown of glory and a diadem of beauty" to his people, Isa. xxviii, 5; and his owning of them shall be their crown and diadem, they shall be a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God," Isa. lxii, 3. He will, by his Spirit and graces in them, make them his crown and diadem, which he will hold in his hand to shew it to all the world. Well therefore it is said, that, "he is not ashamed to be called their God."

§5. *Thirdly*, The ground and evidence of this privilege; "for he hath prepared for them a city." The words either give a reason why he was not ashamed

to be called their God, or contain an *evidence* that he was so called. In the first way the casual conjunction (*γὰρ*) *for*, denotes the reason or cause whence it was that God was not ashamed to be called their God. It is true, they were poor wanderers, pilgrims in the earth, who had neither city nor habitation, so that it might be a shame to own them. But, saith the apostle, God had not therein respect to their *then present* state and condition, but that which he had *provided* for them. Or, in the second way, it may be an *evidence* that he was not ashamed to be called their God, in that he did what might become that relation.

The thing itself, which is either the cause or evidence of that title, is, that (*ἡτοιμασεν αὐτοῖς*) "*he hath prepared for them a city*;" the allusion is to *colonies*, with cities and towns ready prepared for their habitation and entertainment; and the word here used is constantly applied to the preparation of heaven and glory for believers, Matt. xx, 28, &c. and two things are included in it:

1. The eternal *destination* of glory to all believers, Matt. xxv, 34, "a kingdom *prepared* for you from the foundation of the world;" that is, designed, destined for you in the eternal counsel of God.

2. It denotes the *fitting* and *suiting* of that city to them, as the means of their eternal rest and blessedness. So our Savior useth the word, John xiv, 3, "I go to prepare a place for you;" his entrance into heaven being pre-requisite to that glorious state which is promised to New Testament believers.

§6. We may hence make some *observations*;

1. To avow openly in the world, by our walking and living, with a constant profession, that our portion and inheritance are not in it, but in things invisible, in heaven above, is an illustrious act and fruit of faith;

but then it is incumbent on us, that we do not in any thing contradict this testimony; if we love the world like others, use and abuse it like others, we destroy our own profession, and declare our faith to be vain.

2. Faith looks on *heaven* as the country of believers, a glorious country, an habitation of eternal rest; thence they derive their original; they are born from above; there is their portion and inheritance; and the blessed God is the one and the other; thereunto they have right by their adoption; heaven is prepared for them as a city, a house full of mansions; therein they have their conversation, and after it they continually long.

3. In all the groans of burdened souls under their present trials, there is included a fervent desire after heaven and the enjoyment of God: so was there in this complaint of the patriarchs, that they were strangers and pilgrims. Heaven is at the bottom of the sighs and groans of all believers, whatever may outwardly give occasion to them, Rom. viii, 23.

4. This is the greatest honor, advantage, and security that any can be made partakers of, that God will bear the name and title of "*their God*;" and thus it is with all believers by virtue of their relation to Christ, as he declares, John xx, 17, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, unto my God, and your God." See 2 Cor. vi, 16—18. The privileges and benefits hereon depending cannot be numbered.

5. God's owning believers as *his*, and himself to be *their God*; is an abundant recompence of all the hardships which they undergo in their pilgrimage.

6. Divine wisdom hath so ordered the relation between God and the church, that what is in itself an infinite condescension in God, and as it were a reproach to him in the wicked idolatrous world, should also be his glory and honor, wherein he is well pleased.



7. Where God, by way of sovereign grace, so infinitely condescends as to take any into covenant with himself, so that he may be justly styled "their God;" he shall make them such as shall be a glory to himself. And,

8. We may see here the woful condition of them, who are ashamed to be called *his people*, and make that name a term of reproach to others.

9. Eternal rest and glory are made sure for all believers in the eternal purpose of the will of God, and his actual preparation of them by grace; which, being embraced by faith, is a sufficient support for them under all the trials, troubles, and dangers of this life, Luke xii, 32.

#### VERSES 17—19.

*By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten Son. Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

§1. Connexion. §2. (I.) Exposition. Abraham's trial. §3. His offering Isaac. §4—6. The amplification of his obedience. §7, 8. Exposition continued. §9—14. (II.) Observations.

§1. **H**AVING spoken of the faith of the patriarchs in the last period of time, *in general*, with respect to their peculiar state as pilgrims in the land of Canaan, he now singles them out *in particular*, giving single instances of their faith, beginning with Abraham.

§2. (I.) "By faith Abraham when he was tried." The instance is such as became him who was to be an example in believing to all that should succeed him; that through which he was renowned, and esteemed blessed, in all generations. The trial of Abraham was by a *private command* that he should sacrifice his *son*, which was unlawful for him to do of his own accord;

both as it was a sacrifice that God had not ordained, and because he had no such power over the life of an obedient son; but in this command God, by virtue of his sovereign right and authority over all, changed the nature of the *act* and made it lawful, yea, a *duty* to Abraham; Isaac was *his* absolutely, and by way of sovereignty, before and above any interest of Abraham in him; He is the supreme Lord of life and death, and may appoint what means of them he pleaseth; so when he commanded the Israelites to borrow jewels of the Egyptians, which they carried away with them, he did it by transferring the right and title of them from one people to the other; Exod. xii, 35, 36; wherefore, it was no part of Abraham's trial, that what he was to do had any thing of *sin* in it; no, for he knew full well that God's command had made it not only lawful, but his indispensable duty; but his trial arose from other considerations; and the *internal* work of God under this temptation was the *corroboration of the faith* of Abraham unto a blessed victory, which was in his design from the beginning; and the temptation is said to be for his *trial*, as if God had done it for his *own* satisfaction respecting the faith and love of Abraham; "Now I know that thou fearest God," Gen. xxii, 12; but these things are spoken after the manner of men; God knew his faith and the strength of it, as also the sincerity of his love, for they were both from himself; he knew what would be the issue of the trial, and what he had himself determined concerning the life of Isaac; and therefore, "Now I know," is no more than "now I have made known," to thyself and others; thus therefore he was *tried*; God by his command, which could not be obeyed but by a vigorous, victorious faith, fervent love, and a reverential fear of God, made it known unto Abraham for his comfort, and to all the church

for their example, to his everlasting honor, what power of grace was in him, and by what principles he was entirely actuated in his walking before God; and it is remarkable that the trial must have been greatly augmented by the casting out of Ishmael, which is reported in the foregoing chapter, so that he being gone from his family, he had no other son but Isaac, in whom all his expectations were centred.

§3. The act and effect of his faith was—"He offered Isaac;" the command was to "offer him for a burnt offering," which was first to be *slain*, and then *consumed* with fire; accordingly the apostle affirms that he *offered* him; that is, he "fully obeyed the command of God;" but that command did not respect the *event*; Abraham was not obliged to *believe* that he should *actually* be offered in sacrifice; but he believed that it was his duty to obey the divine command, which he accordingly did; reflect, therefore, in what sense God *commanded* Isaac should be offered, in the same did Abraham offer him; for he fulfilled the command of God.

1. He parted with his own *interest* in him, and gave him up wholly to God and his will, which was the principal thing in every offering or sacrifice; this God takes notice of in an especial manner, as that which answered his mind; "Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me," Gen. xxii, 12.

2. He complied in the way designed in the command for the giving him up unto God, *viz.* as a *sacrifice by blood and fire*, wherein himself was to be the offerer; herein was the great convulsion of nature; but his faith rose superior to it. What! to have an *only beloved son* slain by the effusion of his blood, visibly under his eyes; yea, to do it with his own hand, and to stand by his consumption in the fire! How unparal-

led the trial! We read indeed in heathen stories, and in holy writ with reference to Moloch, that some in overwhelming distresses have sacrificed some of their children in a kind of rage and fury, out of hopes to be gainers by it; but this was not the case of Abraham; he was at perfect peace with God and man, with an affluence of all other things to the utmost of his desires; on all accounts his son was dear to him, to as great an height as it is possible perhaps for natural affection to arise; besides, the holy patriarch was quite sedate in his mind; had no hope of advantage; yea, what could be expected but the utter ruin of his family and posterity? Yet he complies with the unequivocal divine mandate to offer him, with his own hands, a bloody sacrifice unto God.

8. He did as much for the trial of his faith, as if his son had been actually slain. There could not have been a greater assault upon it in case he had been offered; he looked on him as *dead* under his eye; and thence, as we shall see, is said to "receive him in a figure;" he was, as to his faith, in the same condition as if he had been dead. Wherefore,

4. In compliance with the command of God, he shut his eyes, as it were, against all difficulties and consequences; resolving to venture Isaac, posterity, truth of promises, &c. upon the *authority of God*, wherein he is principally proposed as our example.

§4. The next thing to be considered is the *amplification* of this obedience of Abraham in the various circumstances of it; and to begin with the *person* of Isaac; he was his "*only begotten*," that *only son* in whom the promise of the seed should be accomplished; farther to clear the reason of this expression, it may be observed, that the sons of Abraham by Keturah were not yet born; Ishmael was, by the command

of God himself, put out of his family, as one that should not be the heir of his family, by whom his seed should be reckoned—he was his *only begotten* by Sarah, who was concerned in all this affair between God and him no less than himself; and—the Holy Ghost taketh into consideration the *whole state of things* between God and Abraham, in his call, his separation from the world, in the covenant made with him, in the promise made him concerning the blessed seed; in all which *Isaac alone* had any concernment; therefore as Abraham alone was placed in these circumstances, he was his “only begotten son.” Finally, this expression is used in scripture sometimes for as much as *peculiarly* and *entirely beloved* above all others, Prov. iv, 2, to which there is here great respect.

Abraham was very remote from being savage or cruel, nor did he design that *stoical apathy* which was so falsely and foolishly boasted of by some of old; nor was he (*αστοργος*) *without natural affections*, which the apostle reckons amongst the worst vices of the heathens, Rom. i, 31; yea, he was such a tender and affectionate father, that the sending of Ishmael out of his family was more than he could well bear, until God comforted him in it, Gen. xxi, 11—13; what now must the workings of his heart needs be towards Isaac, a son whom he had so long waited and prayed for, the only child of his dear wife, (who was the companion of all his wandering troubles and trials) and who was now grown up (as is most probable) to the age of sixteen or seventeen years, and had engaged his affections by all ways possible, being the stay of his age, the life of his family, his only hope and comfort in the world? And how was he to deal with him? Not to send him out of his family, with some provision, and a guide, as he sent Ishmael; not to part with him for a time

into a foreign country; but to take him himself, to bind him, slay him with a knife, and then burn him to ashes. Who can conceive what convulsions in nature must needs be occasioned hereby? The advantages also which Satan might hence take to excite unbelief with respect to the command of God, are obvious to all: "Can it be thought that he who is infinitely good, benign, and gracious, should command one who fears and loves him, thus to tear and rend his own bowels, to devour his own offspring, his only son? Hearken a little to the out-cries of love, fear, and sorrow, and be not too hasty to be the executioner of all thine own joy." Here then the divine power of faith manifested itself; "*it is the Lord,*" prevented all murmurings, silenced all reasonings, and preserved his mind in a frame fit to approach God in his holy worship.

§5. His obedience farther appears, in that he had "received the promises." It is twice said in this chapter, that neither he nor any other believers under the Old Testament, received the *promise*; verse 18—39, but here it is affirmed, that he *did receive* the *promises*. The solution is easy; for in those two other places, by the "promise," the *thing promised* is intended. And this sufficiently discovers the vanity of those expositors who would have these promises to respect principally, yea *only*, the land of Canaan, with the numerous posterity of Abraham therein. For this was fully enjoyed by them under the Old Testament, as much as ever it was to be enjoyed, when the apostle affirms concerning them that they "received not the promise." But Abraham is said to *receive the promises* formally, inasmuch as God made and gave them unto him, and he believed them, or received them by faith. The scripture calleth the same thing indif-

ferently the *promise* or the *promises*, see Expos. on chap. vi, 13—18.

§6. "Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called;" (πρὸς οὗ) *of whom* or *concerning whom*; the word "*whom*," immediately relates to Isaac. (Ἠλαλήθη) *It was said*; that is, it was expressly spoken to him by God himself, on the occasion of sending Ishmael out of his family; that he might have full assurance of the accomplishment of the promises in him. And this was that which gave the greatest exercise to his faith. In Isaac (γὰρ τὸ ἀπὸ κληρονομίας σου σπέρμα) *shall a seed be called unto thee*;" that is, the seed promised from the beginning shall be given in him; the traduction of it into the world shall be through him and no other. The principal subject matter of the promise was no other than Christ himself, with the whole work of his mediation for the redemption and salvation of the church. This is so evident, Acts ii, 38, 39; Gal. iii, 16, that it needs no confirmation. Supposing therefore what we have spoken before concerning the exercise of faith, occasioned by his natural affections, with reference to his only son; and who can conceive with what heart Abraham received the thunder of this command? what perplexities he was cast into, or at least would have been so, had not faith carried him through them all? He seems to be pressed unavoidably with one or the other of the greatest evils in the world; either he must disobey the command of God, or he must let go his faith in the promise; either of them filled with eternal ruin.

§7. "Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." The immediate object of his faith in general was the *power of God*, that God was *able*. Abraham firmly believed, not only the *immor-*

*ality* of the soul, but also the *resurrection* from the dead. Had he not done so, he would not have betaken himself into this relief in his distress. It is in vain to inquire what special revelation Abraham had of these things; for the resurrection from the dead, which includes the other, was an essential part of the first promise, or no relief is tendered therein against the curse, which was a return into the dust. He owned the omnipotency of God, as able to produce inconceivable effects. He did not limit God as they did in the wilderness, as the psalmist at large describes their unbelief, Psalm lxxviii, 19, 20, 40, 41. He rested on this, that the power of God could extend itself to things by him incomprehensible. This was the life and soul, as it were, of the faith of Abraham; he believed that the power of God was infinitely sufficient to secure his truth and veracity in his promises, though he could not conceive the way whereby it was to be done. And this is the life of faith at present in all true believers. Abraham still firmly believed the accomplishment of the great promise, although he could not discern the way whereby it should be fulfilled. Had his faith failed herein, his obedience had been useless. This is the last anchor of faith; it cleaves unto, and rests upon the truth of God in his promises, against all objections, temptations, and oppositions, although they are such as reason in its highest exercise cannot conquer. God, who cannot lie, hath promised, Tit. i, 2. On these principles, which were immovably fixed in his mind, he *reasoned within himself* as to the way and manner whereby the power of God would make good his truth in the accomplishment of the promise. *Accounting* (λογισσόμενος) *computing*; *reasoning in himself* from the principles of faith, that "God would raise him from the dead," or more em-



phatically, *even from the dead*. This then is that which he reckoned upon in himself;—that God was able to *raise the dead* in general;—that he could so raise up *Isaac* after his death; and—that after this resurrection, if it should so happen, it would be the *same* individual person that was offered; whereby the word which he “spake to his servants,” (that he and the lad would go and worship and come again to them, Gen. xxii, 5,) would be made good.† It is evident, therefore, that by faith he devolved the whole event of things on the sovereignty, power, and truth of God; and in *his reasoning*, thereon thought it *most likely* that God would raise him from the dead.

§8. “From whence also he received him in a figure.” The promise was absolutely secured; Isaac was preserved alive, that *in him* the seed might be called; Abraham’s obedience was fully accomplished; for he had parted fully with Isaac; he was no more his than if he had been actually dead; whence it is said that he received him again; he was made to be God’s own, to belong to him alone as devoted; and God gave him again to Abraham; Isaac was considered in the state of the dead; that is, under the command of God, and in his father’s determination; so that the apostle says he *offered him*; and therefore it is said that he received him from that state; “whence also;” one expositor conjectures, that respect is had herein to Abraham’s first receiving Isaac at his nativity from the womb of Sarah which was as dead; than which nothing can be more remote from the sense of the place; but whereas Isaac did not die, was not actually dead, he is said to *receive him* from that state only (*εν παραβολη*) *in a figure*; nor have I here any thing to add to what was first fixed on by the most judicious Calvin, who hath herein been followed by all sober

expositors; "he received him as from the dead, in a figure or resemblance of the resurrection from the dead."

§9. (II.) Several important *observations* here offer;

1. That God alone knows how to ascribe work and duty proportionate to the strength of grace received; he knew that Abraham's faith would carry him through this trial, and thereon he spared him not.

2. That oftentimes God reserves great trials for a well exercised faith; so this trial befell Abraham when his faith had been victorious in sundry other instances.

§10. 1. Faith must be *tried*; and of all graces it is most suited to trial.

2. God proportions trials, for the most part, to the strength of faith.

3. Great trials in believers are an evidence of great faith; though not understood, either by themselves or others, before such trials.

4. Trials are the only touchstone of faith, without which men must want the best evidence of its sincerity and efficacy, and the best way of testifying it to others. Wherefore,

5. We ought not to be afraid of trials, because of the admirable advantages of faith by them, See Jam. i, 2—4; 1 Pet. i, 6, 7. And,

6. Let them be jealous over themselves who have had no special instances of the trial of their faith.

7. True faith being tried will in the issue be victorious.

§11. 1. Where there is a divine command, evidencing itself to our consciences to be so, it is the wisdom and duty of faith to close its eye against whatever seems insuperable in difficulties, or inextricable in consequences. Rom. iv, 18, 19.

2. Divine revelations gave such an *evidence* of their being immediately from God to those who received them, that though they contradicted their reason and

interest, yet they received them without any hesitation. If there had been the least room left for a scruple, whether the command given to Abraham were immediately from God or no; whether it was not such as, either with respect to its original, or the means of communication, might be subject to any mistake, he could never with any satisfaction have complied with it. Yet *blind obedience* to all the commands of men is blasphemy to require, and impiety to give; it is a wonder how this is endured among mankind, especially since they have had such experience of its fruits and effects; yea, though it be that which is absolutely due to the infinite sovereignty of the Divine Being, yet God—designing to govern us according to the principles, powers, and faculties of our natures, which he himself hath given us to this end, that we may comply with his rule in a way of obedience—requires nothing from us but what is our *reasonable service*.

§8. It is a privilege and advantage to have an offering of price to offer to God, if he calls for it, and when we have hearts to make use of it; and such are our lives, our names, our relations, estates, liberties, &c.

4. Obedience begun in faith, without any reserves, but with a sincere intention to fulfil the whole work of it, is accepted with God as if it were absolutely complete. *Confessors* may be justly reckoned in the next degree to *martyrs*.

§12. Again observe; that the power of faith in its consequences over natural affections—when their inclinations are contrary to the will of God, whereby they are exposed to receive impressions from temptations—is a blessed evidence of its being sincere, and an eminent part of its glory; such is its trial in the loss of dear relations, or their irrecoverable misery in this world, wherein natural affections are apt to indispose

the mind, and to hinder it from a quiet submission to the will of God; whereby David greatly failed in the case of Absalom. But another instance like this of Abraham there never was, nor ever shall be: and all less cases are contained in the greater.

§13. Let it be farther *observed*, relative to this memorable transaction;

1. That in great and inextricable difficulties, it is the duty, wisdom, and nature of faith to fix itself on the immense properties of the divine nature, whereby it can effect things inconceivable and incomprehensible, see Isa. xl, 28—31.

2. God may justly require the assent and confidence of faith to all things which infinite power and wisdom can effect, though we cannot comprehend the way whereby it may be accomplished, see Isa. l, 10.

3. God's dealings with his church sometimes are such, that unless we shut our eyes, and stop our ears, against all objections and temptations, referring his promises only to divine sovereignty, wisdom, and veracity, we can never abide in a comfortable course of obedience, see Ezek. xxxvii, 1, 2, 11—14.

4. This is the glory of faith, that it can spiritually compose the soul in the midst of all storms and temptations, under darkness as to events; and enable it in a due manner to attend to all duties of worship and obedience; so as to sanctify the name of God in them, and not to provoke him with any irregularities of mind or actions.

5. In any surprisal with seemingly insuperable difficulties, it is our duty immediately to set faith at work and not to consult with flesh and blood, or hearken to carnal reasonings or contrivances, which will but entangle us, and increase our distress.

6. There may sometimes, through God's providen-

tial disposal of all things, be an appearance of such an opposition and inconsistency between his commands and promises, as nothing but faith bowing the soul to divine sovereignty can reconcile, Gen. xxii, 8—12.

§14. Again, *observe*;

1. It is good for us to have our faith firmly built on the fundamental articles of religion, without which we cannot act it on particular occasions, wherein an application is made of such fundamental principles to our present cases.

2. Faith obtaining the victory in great trials, and carrying us through difficult duties of obedience, warranted by divine command, shall have a reward even in this life, in many unspeakable spiritual privileges and advantages.

3. If we are the children of Abraham, we have no reason to expect an exemption from the greatest trials that the same faith which was in him is able to conflict with.

4. We have no reason to be afraid of the fiercest and severest trials that may befall us, having so great an instance that faith is able to carry us through them all victoriously.

5. Though death should seem to pass on any of the promises concerning the church, yet nothing need shake our faith, whilst we can believe the resurrection of the dead; they will be given us "in a figure" of it.

#### VERSE 20.

*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

§1. The faith of Isaac. Wherein deficient. §2. Wherein it was right. §3. The divine purity and wisdom in ordering and over-ruling the reproveable mistakes of men. §4. Isaac blessing his sons. §5. Concerning things to come, *what*.

§1. ISAAC was an holy person, who, though a pilgrim, seems to have spent most of his time in peace, and without great perils and dangers; wherefore, there is less spoken of him, and the trials of his faith, than either of his father or his son. Nevertheless there is no doubt but that this son of the promise led his life in the *faith* of the promise; and the promise was particularly renewed to him; Gen. xxvi, 4. The apostle chooseth to instance in his faith with respect to the *blessing of his sons*, which was in his old age, and was the most eminent act of it, because of the conveyance of the promise made thereby to his seed. Whatever may be spoken in excuse of Isaac, it is certain he failed greatly in his inordinate love to Esau, whom he could not but know to be a profane person, and that on so slight an account as eating of his venison, Gen. xxv, 28; nor had he sufficiently inquired into the mind of God in the oracle that his wife received concerning their sons; there is no question, on the one hand, but that he knew of it; nor on the other, that he did not understand it; for if the holy man had known that it was the determinate will of God, he would not have contradicted it; but this arose from want of *diligent inquiry* into the mind of God.

§2. The faith of Isaac was right in this, that the promise was sure to his seed by virtue of the covenant, and that he was instrumentally, by way of external evidence, to convey it by his solemn benediction: the first was express in the covenant; for his blessing was a promise of things to come, as in the text; but he missed in the application of it to the object of his own intention, though in fact by the divine disposal of circumstances, he was in the right; this mistake hindered not but that he blessed Jacob *in faith*; wherefore, it

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cannot be denied, but that sometimes, when true *faith* is rightly fixed on *divine promises*, that those who truly believe may, through darkness, infirmities, and temptations, put themselves on irregular ways for their accomplishment; and as in these ways may fail and miscarry, to the scandal of religion, and a dangerous concussion of their own faith; so, if they succeed, their ways are not approved of, as they will quickly understand; as it is our duty firmly to believe the promises, so it is our wisdom not to attempt, upon any temptations, provocations, or advantages, their accomplishment in any unwarrantable way.

§3. We may see herein the infinite purity of the Divine will, effectually accomplishing its own purposes and designs through the failings and miscarriages of men, without the least mixture with, or approbation of their iniquities or miscarriages; he accepted their persons, pardoned their sins, and effected the matter according to their desire.

§4. (Ευλογησε) *He blessed them*; these patriarchal blessings were, partly, *prayers*; and partly, *predictions*; they were authoritative applications of God's promises to the person to whom they belonged for the confirmation of their faith; so far as they consisted in *solemn prayer*, they were an effect of the ordinary *parental ministry*, and as such ought to be used by all parents, not as some, by the trifling custom of daily asking and giving blessing, but by solemn reiterated prayer to that purpose—(Πιστει) *by faith*. But here is a double difficulty; for the blessing of *Jacob* was from *immediate inspiration*, and not intended by Isaac to be applied to Jacob; and the blessing of *Esau* only related to temporal things, not with respect to any special promise; I answer, as to the first, faith was acted by the promise, and was guided as to its object by God's providence;

and immediate inspiration doth no way hinder the actings of faith on preceding revelations; he had the warrant of the word of God before revealed for the ground of his faith, and his immediate inspiration guided him to act according to it; and, as for the blessing of Esau, although it respected only temporal things, yet he gave it him in faith also, in that it was the fruit of his prayer for him, and contained predictions which he had received by divine revelation.

§5. The subject matter of both these things were (*μελοντων*) *things to come*; that is, things that were not yet, nor yet to have their present accomplishment; for that part of the blessing of Jacob, that he should be the "Lord of his brethren," or, as expressed in the blessing of Esau, "thou shall serve thy brother," was not fulfilled in *their days*, there being a great appearance of the contrary; wherefore, the things contained in these blessings, absolutely considered, were yet to come among their posterity. Now the blessing of Jacob did not contain only a better portion in this world than that of Esau, as Grotius would have it; nor had there been any need of so great a contest about the difference between the land of Canaan and that of Edom; but, as it comprised the numerous posterity of Jacob, their quiet habitation, power, and dominion in the land of Canaan; so the principal subject of it was the enclosure of the church, the confinement of the covenant, the enjoyment of the promise of the blessed seed, to him and his offspring; and it was the contempt of *this*, and not of a double portion of *earthly* things, for which Esau is stigmatized as a *profane person*.



## VERSE 21.

*By faith Jacob when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

§1. Jacob's faith, in blessing the sons of Joseph. §2. Why this instance selected. §3. This holy reverence and faith. §4, 5. Observations.

§1. "BY faith Jacob when he was a dying;" (*αποθυμῶν*, *moriens*, *moriturus*, *cum moreretur*,) *when he drew nigh to death*; probably a few days before his death; "worshipped leaning on the top of his staff;" (*ἐπὶ τὸ ἀκρον τῆς ραβδου αὐτοῦ*) The Vulg. Lat. (*et adoravit fastigium virgæ ejus*,) *he adored the top of his rod*, leaving out the preposition (*ἐπὶ*) *on*, corrupts the sense; and hence a vain and foolish opinion hath been fancied about adoring or *worshipping creatures*, as remote from the sense of this place as from truth.

§2. But why does the apostle choose to instance in this particular? for Jacob, as he abounded in trials and temptations above all the other patriarchs; so he gave sundry illustrious testimonies of his faith, seemingly of greater evidence than this of blessing the sons of Joseph.

This is the only difficulty of the place, which yet by expositors is taken little or no notice of. But if we look attentively into the thing itself, we shall find that it was an effect of singular divine wisdom in the apostle, whereby he fixed on this instance of the faith of Jacob. For in his "blessing of the sons of Joseph," the good man, being near to death, makes a *recapitulation* of all the principal concernments of his life, as it was a *life of faith*; and we shall therefore consider some of those circumstances, which manifest how proper this instance was to the purpose of the apostle.

1. It was the exercise of his faith in his *old age*; his natural decays abated not in the least his spiritual strength.

2. In this blessing of Joseph and his sons, he solemnly recognized, pleaded, and asserted the covenant made with Abraham; "God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk," Gen. xlviii, 15; this is the life of faith,—*"to lay hold on the covenant,"*—and this he did expressly.

3. As he made a solemn acknowledgment of all *spiritual* mercies by virtue of the covenant; so he added thereunto that of all *temporal* mercies also; "the God which fed me all my life long unto that day." It was a work of faith to retain a precious thankful remembrance of divine Providence, during the whole course of his life.

4. He reflects on all the hazards, trials, and evils that befell him, and the exercise of his faith in them all. "Redeemed me from all evil."

5. In particular, he remembers the actings of his faith in the matter recorded by Hosea, chap. xii, 3, 4; and of his faith in the Son of God in an especial manner, as he was the angel of the covenant. "The angel, saith he, that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." By this "*angel*" the person of the Son of God, as he was to be the messenger of the covenant and the redeemer of the church is undoubtedly intended.

6. The difference here made between the sons of Joseph, when he was blind, the disposal of his hands, contrary to the desire of their father; with the prediction of their condition many ages after,—were all evidences of the special presence of God with him, and consequently of his own faith in God.

7. He laid the foundation of his faith in an especial *revelation*; Gen. xlviii, 3, "And Jacob said unto Jo-

seph, God Almighty, (God in covenant with me) appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me," &c. On all these considerations (and several others that might be mentioned) it is evident, that the apostle fixed on this instance of faith in Jacob, for weighty reasons.

§3. The latter clause of the words, or the other instance of the faith of Jacob, that "he worshipped leaning on the top of the staff," hath a peculiar difficulty in it, from a difference between the words of the apostle, and those of Moses concerning the same thing, Gen. xlvii. But we should not forget that the apostle doth not tie himself to the *express words* of the original text in his allegations out of the Old Testament, but only gives the *certain sense* and meaning of the Holy Ghost in them. The word in the original (מִטָּה) may have a different pronunciation by a different supply of vowels, and so a different signification. If we read it *mittah*, it signifies a *bed*, as we render it in Genesis; if we read it *mitteh*, it signifies a *staff* or a *rod*, on which a man may lean; both from the same verb (נָטָה) to *extend* or to *incline*. And hence the difference arises. Although I will not contend that the words in that place have a double signification, of a bed and a staff, yet this is the true solution of this difficulty; the apostle did not design a precise translation of the words of Moses, but intended only to express the *same thing*; and whereas that was undoubtedly the *posture* of Jacob in worshipping God, the apostle useth his liberty in expressing it by his "leaning on his staff;" for that he did "bow towards the head of the bed," and at the same time "lean on his staff," we are assured by comparing the divine writers together; see 1 Kings i, 47. Jacob's *leaning on his staff*, added to—his "bowing himself unto the head of the bed," completes the representation of his rever-

*ence and faith: by the one he bowed down, by the other he sustained himself; as whatever sustains and supports, is in scripture called a staff.*

§4. Hence observe,

1. It is an eminent mercy when faith not only holds out to the end, but waxeth strong towards the last conflict with death; as in the case with Jacob.

2. It is also a signal mercy to be able by faith in the close of our pilgrimage to recapitulate all the passages of our lives, in mercies, trials, afflictions, so as to give glory to God with respect to them all; thus did Jacob.

3. That which enlivens and encourages faith, as to other things is a peculiar respect to the angel, the Redeemer, by whom all grace and mercy is communicated to us.

4. It is our duty so to live in a constant exercise of faith, as that we may be ready and strong in it when we die.

5. Though we should "die daily," yet there is a *peculiar season*, when death is in its near approach, which requires particular actings of faith.

§5. 1. "In all acts of divine worship, whether solemn or occasional, it is our duty to dispose our bodies to such a posture of reverence, as may represent the inward frame of our minds." So did Jacob; and it is reckoned as an act of his faith.

2. There is an allowance for the infirmities of age and sickness, in our outward deportment in divine worship, so that there be no indulgence to sloth, and that a due reverence of God and holy things be preserved. These postures which are commended in Jacob, would not become others in their health and strength. So David affirms that he would "rise at midnight (out of his bed) to give thanks to God," Psalm cxix, 62.

## VERSE 22.

*By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*

§1. Two instances of the faith of Joseph. §2. First, his making mention of the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt. To whom, when, and the way whereby. §3. Secondly, his commandment concerning his bones. §4. The evidence of his faith in this particular. The popish argument for relics, ridiculous. §5. Observations.

§1. **T**wo instances are here proposed of the faith of Joseph—That he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt; and—that he gave commands concerning his bones. The account is given in the close of the book of Genesis.

§2. The *first* instance proposed of Joseph's faith, is "his making mention of the departing of the children of Israel" out of Egypt. But,

1. To *whom* did he spake these words, and gave this charge? To "his *brethren*," Gen. i, 24. Some of his *own brethren*, strictly so called, were yet alive, as is evident concerning Levi. For Joseph, when he died, was but a hundred and ten years old, ver. 26; and Levi lived one hundred and thirty-seven years, being not twenty years older than Joseph. Also under the name of his "brethren" his *brother's son* may be intended, as is usual. But as to the *command* concerning his bones, the expression is changed. For it is said, that he took an oath of the children of Israel; and so it is again repeated, Exod. xiii, 10. "He had straitly sworn the children of Israel;" that is, he brought the whole people into this engagement by the heads of their tribes, that they might be obliged in after generations; for he foresaw that it would not be the work of them who were then living. Moreover we may notice,

2. The *time* wherein these things were done, (τελευτων) "when he was *dying*." "And Joseph said unto his brethren, *I die*." This evidence he gave of the *steadfastness* of his faith, that it had accompanied him through all his afflictions and prosperity, not forsaking him now at his death. He had lived longer in glory, power, and wealth; but through all he preserved his faith in the promise of God entire.

3. In the *way* whereby he expressed his faith, we may remark the *object* of it, or what he did believe; and—the *manner* of his acting that faith.

This "*departure* of the children of Israel" is not intended as a *mere departing* thence; but such as whereby the *promise* made to their fathers should be accomplished; and he seems to have respect to the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xv, 13, 14; wherein the sojourning and affliction of his seed in a strange land was determined before their admission into the land of Canaan.

As to the *manner* of acting his faith towards this object, he "*made mention*" of it; he called his brethren to him, and spake of it unto them all, Gen. i, 24; both to discharge his own duty, (for with the mouth confession is made unto salvation) and to strengthen their faith; for when they found that he in all his glory and wealth embraced the *promise*, and died in the faith of it, what a great encouragement was it to them, who were in a meaner condition, firmly to cleave to the same promise; and when any who are great, mighty, and wealthy in the world, do in their public profession prefer the promises of the gospel to their present enjoyments, it is of great use in the church.

He "*made mention*" of it, or called it to remembrance; it was not that which he had by immediate present revelation; but it was from his reliance on the

promises long before given; the prospect of their bondage and helpless condition did not at all weaken his faith as to the accomplishment of the promise; wherefore, when the apostle says, that he "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel," he had not only respect to the thing itself, but also to the manner and circumstances of it; that it should be after great oppression, and by a work of almighty power.

This was a proper season for Joseph to make mention of the promise and its accomplishment, and his embracing of it shews the wisdom of his faith; he was now *dying*; and at the solemn juncture, his brethren, the posterity of Jacob, knew not what would become of them, being deprived of him who was their only protector; at this *season*, to testify his own faith in the promise, now he had no more concernment in this world, and to encourage them to the like confidence in it, makes mention of his accomplishment.

§3. *Secondly*, There is a particular instance of the faith of Joseph, in that (επέειλεν) "*he gave commandment concerning his bones*," which was peculiar to himself. What the apostle expresseth by his *commanding*, or giving commandment was his taking an oath of his brethren and their posterity in them, Gen. i, 25. "He straitly charged the children of Israel with an oath," Exod. xiii, 19; as it was an act of *authority* in him, (for he had the rule over his brethren,) it was a *command*; the manner of the obligation to the performance of it was by an *oath*. So Abraham gave charge and command to Eliezer his servant about taking a wife for Isaac with an oath, Gen. xxiv, 2, 3, 9; and this kind of oaths in things lawful, for a good end not arbitrarily imposed, but entered into by consent, are good in themselves, and sometimes necessary; the apostle saith only, that "he gave commandment concern-

ing his bones;" and doth not declare what it was that he gave in charge concerning them; but this is expressed in the story, viz. "that when God visited them, and delivered them out of Egypt, they should carry his bones along with them into Canaan," Gen. i, 25. In order to this they *embalmed* him, and put him in a coffin in Egypt, ver. 26; probably the Egyptians left the care of his funeral to his brethren, and that his coffin remained in the custody of their posterity, perhaps his own in particular, until the time of their departure; then Moses took him into his care, Exod. xiii, 19; and the issue of the whole was, that into the land of Canaan they were safely carried, according to the oath of the people, and buried in *Sichem*, in a parcel of ground whereof Jacob had made a purchase, and left it in legacies to the children of Joseph, Josh. xxiv, 32.

§4. But there were some things peculiar to Joseph which caused his faith to act in this way about the disposal of his bones. For,

1. He had been of great power, authority, and dignity among the Egyptians; his fame and reputation for wisdom, righteousness, and legislation were great among the nations; he might therefore justly have feared, that if he had not thus openly renounced all cognation and alliance with them, he might among posterity be esteemed an Egyptian, which he abhorred; therefore he established this lasting monument of his being of the seed and posterity of Abraham, and not an Egyptian; yea, it is thought by many that in after ages they worshipped him under the name of *Serapis*, and the symbol of an ox; but this (as much as in him was) he prevented by the removal of his bones.

2. He did it plainly to encourage the faith and ex-



pectation of his brethren and their posterity, both for the *certainty* of their future deliverance, and also to take them off from all intention to fix themselves in Egypt, seeing he who had all advantages above them for that end, would not have so much as his *bones* to abide in the land; the frame of his spirit, now he was dying, may be fairly considered as an indication of what it was in the whole course of his life; he is not *solicitous* about the disposal of his wealth and revenues, which no doubt were very great; but his mind is wholly on the *promise*, and thereby on the covenant with Abraham; it is highly probable that his wife Asenath, a woman of a princely family, was converted from idolatry to the knowledge of God and faith in him; and hereon, probably, she also was contented that her children and posterity should fall from their parental honor and revenues, to take up their portion among the afflicted people of God. The mighty working of his faith shines out in all these things; and this instance of the apostle eminently suited the argument he had in hand.

The plea of some of the Roman church from this place, for the preservation and veneration of *reliques*, or the *bones* of saints departed—digging men's bones out of their graves, enshrining and placing them on altars, carrying them up and down in procession, adorning them with all signs of religious veneration, applying them to miraculous operations in curing diseases, casting out devils, and the like—is ridiculous and contemptible.

§5. Hence we may observe,

1. That it is of great use to the edification of the church, that such believers as have been eminent in profession, should at their dying moments testify their faith in the promises of God; so did Jacob, so did

Joseph; and blessed be God, so others have done, to the great advantage of the living.

2. Joseph, after his trial of all that this world could afford, and when he was dying, chose the *promise* for his lot and portion.

3. No interposition of difficulties ought to weaken our faith, as to the accomplishment of the promises of God.

#### VERSE 23.

*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

§1. The parents of Moses, their faith. §2. The cruelty of Pharaoh prevented. §3. Moses hid by his parents. §4. A peculiar motive to it. §5, 6. Faith the principle of their acting. §7. Observations.

§1. **I**N searching the sacred records of eminent examples of the power and efficacy of faith, the apostle proceeds to Moses; and indeed, if we consider his person and circumstances, the work he was called to, the trials, difficulties, and temptations he had to engage with, the concernment of the glory of God and of the whole church in him, the illustrious representation of the redemption and deliverance of the church by Christ in what he did, with his success and victory over all opposition, we must acknowledge that there cannot be a more excellent exemplification of the power of faith, than that was which was given in him; for this cause, the apostle takes one step backwards, to declare the faith of his *parents* in preserving him when an infant.

§2. After that Pharaoh failed in his design of destroying the male children of the Hebrews by the midwives, he gave the execution of it in charge to all the officers among them, who no doubt were sufficiently

diligent and officious in the work committed to them. About the very entrance of this new effectual way of destroying the male children, when their rage was most fierce, no way abated by compassion, not wearied by long continuance, nor weakened by want of success, Moses, who was destined to be the deliverer of the whole people from their misery, is born and preserved. How blind are poor sinful mortals in all their contrivances against the church of God! When they think all is secure, and that they shall not fail of their end, that their counsels are laid so deep as not to be blown up, their power so uncontrollable, and the way wherein they are engaged so effectual, that God himself can hardly deliver his servants out of their hands; he that sits on high laughs them to scorn, and with an almighty facility lays in provision utterly to destroy them, and to deliver his church.

§3. "Moses was hid three months (*υπο των πατερων αυου*) of his parents." The word (*πατερες*) fathers, is here used in the common gender for (*γονεις*) parents; in the story there is mentioned only of his mother, Exod. ii, 2; and that was, because the execution of the counsel or advice was committed to her; wherein she used also the helps of her daughters, ver. 4; but it is plain his father was no less engaged in this work and duty than his mother; (*εκρυβη τριμηνον*) he was hid by them three months; herein they exercised their faith, in that they concealed, as much as they were able, that a male child was born in the family; they kept him not in the usual place for children, but hid him in some secret part of the house. Here he abode "three months;" about the end of which time probably the report began to grow, that there was a male child born there, which would have occasioned an immediate strict search, from which

they could not have preserved him. No doubt but during this season their diligence was accompanied with fervent cries to God, and the exercise of trust in him. The occasion was great on all hands, and they were not wanting to their duty. The outward act of hiding the child was but an indication of the internal working of faith.

§4. "Because they saw he was a proper child;" (*διότι*) *because*, or when, or whereas they saw. It doth not include the whole cause of what they did, as if this were the *only* reason why they did it, but it respects that impression on their minds which the sight of the child gave them, exciting them to that duty which they had other grounds and reasons for. It is granted, the sight of the child greatly excited their natural affections, by which their minds were made the more ready to engage in the hazard which faith called them to, for his preservation. They saw that he was (*αἰεὶ το ταυδιον*) a *proper child*. The Hebrew word (*טוב*) *Tob*, is applied to every thing that is on any account approveable and *excellent* in its kind. The word signifies *comely*, beautiful, goodly, (*αγαθος, καλος.*) Holy Stephen expressed the force of the Hebrew word by (*αἰεὶς τω Θεω*) *fair to God*, or in the sight of God, Acts vii, 20; which we render *exceeding fair*. No doubt but some unusual sweetness and beauty of countenance is intended. And not only so, but I am persuaded, from that expression of Stephen, that there was (*θειον τι*) an appearance of *somewhat divine* and *supernatural*, which drew the thoughts of the parents to a deep consideration of the child. They quickly thought it was not for nothing that God had given such a peculiarly promising countenance to the infant. This not only drew their affections, engaged them, but moved their minds and judgments to endeavor all lawful ways for

his preservation. *Note*; it is well, when any thing of eminency in our children doth so engage our affections to them, as to make them useful and subservient to diligence in the disposing of them to the glory of God. Otherwise, a fondness in parents arising from the natural endowments of children, is usually hurtful and oftentimes ruinous to both.

§5. The principle of their actings for his preservation in *hiding* him, as also in the means afterwards used, was their *faith*.

1. I take it for granted, that they had no special *particular revelation* concerning the life and work of this child. No such thing is mentioned, nor was it needful for the acting of faith in this matter; and the manner of their deportment in the whole manifests that they had no such thing.

2. They had a firm faith concerning the deliverance of the people out of bondage in the appointed season. This they had an express promise for, and were peculiarly engaged to the belief of it by the divine testimony of Joseph, and his charge to carry his bones with them; and with respect to this deliverance they are said, "Not to fear the king's command," which was the effect of their faith.

§6. It was (*διδασκαλία*) an ordinance, a statute, an edict which had the force of a standing law, established by the king, with the council of the kingdom, Exod. i, 9—11; and this law lay directly against the accomplishment of the promise; for it aimed at the extirpation of the whole race. This the parents of Moses *feared not*; they knew the promise of God for their preservation, multiplication, and deliverance should take place, notwithstanding all the laws of men, and the highest rage in their execution. God having promised to Abraham, that he would multiply his seed, and

expressly to Jacob, that he would do it in Egypt, Gen. xlii, 3; it utterly made void this law from the first enacting. They had also a persuasion that God would provide a person who should by the means of their obedience, and who should conduct them from their bondage. This Moses himself apprehended when he slew the Egyptian, and began to judge that he himself might be the person, Acts vii, 24, 25. And although afterwards he said, "O my Lord, send I pray thee by the hand of him whom thou wilt send," Exod. iv, 13; he was sure he would send one, but prayed that he might not be the man. Now the parents of Moses, having this persuasion deeply fixed in them, and being raised by their distresses to desires and expectations of a deliverer, beholding also the unusual divine beauty of their child—might well be raised to some just hopes, that God had designed him to that great work. Though they had no special revelation of it, they had such an intimation of some great end God had designed him for, as that they could not but say, "Who knows but God may have prepared this child for that end?" and sometimes, as to the event of things, faith riseth no higher, than to such an interrogation; as Joel ii, 13, "they feared not the king's edict." There is no mention of any thing in the royal mandate but that "every male child should be cast into the river," Exod. i, 22; but it is generally and rationally apprehended, that they were forbid to hide their children on pain of death. This they were not so afraid of as to neglect their duty. Neither was their change of method from want of faith, but rather an effect and fruit of it. For when one lawful way of preservation from persecution, oppression, and cruelty will not secure us any longer, it is our duty to betake ourselves to some other which is more likely to do so.

For faith worketh by trust in God, whilst we are in the use of lawful means.

§7. Hence observe,

1. Where there is an agreement between husband and wife, in faith and in fear of the Lord, it makes way to a blessed success in all their duties; when it is otherwise, nothing succeeds to their comfort.

2. When difficult duties befall persons in that relation, it is their wisdom to apply themselves to that part and share of it, which they are best suited for. So was it in this case; Amram, no doubt, was the principal in the advice and contrivance, as his wife was in its actual execution.

3. This is the height of persecution, when private houses are searched by bloody officers to execute tyrannical laws; when the last and utmost retreat of innocence, for that protection which is due to it by the law of God and nature, with the common rules of human society, cannot be a shelter against wicked rage and fury.

4. The rage of men and the faith of the church shall work out the accomplishment of God's counsels and promises, to his glory, from under all perplexities and difficulties that may arise in opposition to it.

#### VERSES 24—26.

*By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of reward.*

1. The faith of Moses. §2. (I.) When he was come to years. §3. Refused the honor of his adoption. §4. By what means came Moses to know his adoption? §5. When did he refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. §6—10. The choice and faith of Moses. §11. his motive. §12—15. (II) Observations.

§1. **T**HIS example is great and signal. The apostle, as we shewed before, takes his instances from the three

states of the church under the Old Testament. The *first* was from the giving of the *first promise* continuing to the call of Abraham. The *second* had its beginning and confirmation in the *call of Abraham*, with the covenant made with him and the token thereof. The constitution and consecration of the *third* state of the church was in *giving the law*, and herein an instance is given in the lawgiver himself. All to manifest, that whatever outward variations the church passed under, yet *faith* and the *promises* were of the same efficacy and power under them all.

§2. (I.) "By faith Moses when he was come to years." None in the old world was more signalized by Providence in his birth, education, and actions, than Moses. Hence his renown was both then, and ever after, very great. He was the *lawgiver*; whence it is manifest, that the law is not opposite to *faith*, seeing the lawgiver himself lived thereby.

(Μεγας γινόμενος, *cum esset grandis, cum factus esset*.) *When he became great.* Syriac: "When he was a man." The word may respect either *state* and condition, or *time of life* and stature. To become *great*, is in scripture and common speech, to become so in wealth, riches, or power, Gen. xxiv, 35; and xxvi, 13; and so Moses was come to *wealth*, power, and honor in the court of Pharaoh, and hence the greatness of his selfdenial here commended. But although this be *true* materially, and hath an especial influence to the commendation of the faith of Moses, yet it is not primarily intended in this expression; for, having declared the faith of his parents, and the providence of God towards him in his infancy, in the foregoing verses the apostle here shews what his own way and acting, *was*, after he grew up to years of understanding. So the



word (*μεγας*) is used for one that is grown up to be a man, (*sui juris*) to act the duty whereunto he was called; Exod. ii, 11, "And it came to pass in those days, after Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren;" where the Hebrew (מֹשֶׁה בֶּן־מִצְרַיִם) is by the *Septuagint* rendered by (*μεγας γενομενος*) the words here used. According as he grew up in stature and understanding, he acted faith in the duties whereunto he was called.

§3. "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." It is manifest from the story, Exod. ii; upon Pharaoh's daughter first finding him in the river, and saving his life, she gave orders to his mother who appeared for a nurse, that she should "nurse him for her's," verse 9. When he was weaned, his mother carried him to her. And it must be acknowledged, that there was no less danger and *trial* of the *faith* of his parents herein, than when they put him into an ark of bulrushes floating on the river. For to carry a tender infant, probably about three years of age, to be bred in an *idolatrous, persecuting* court, was no less dangerous to his soul and eternal condition, than the exposing of him in the river was to his natural life. But when Moses was thus brought to court to Pharaoh's daughter, it is said he became her *son*. It is probable she had no other child; and that she solemnly adopted him to be her son, and consequently the heir of all her honor and riches, which ensued on adoption. Hereon she gave him his name, as was usual in cases of adoption, taking it from the first occasion of her owning him. She called his name *Moses*; and she said "because I drew him out of the water." And this is what God would have him use, as a perpetual remembrance of his deliverance, when he was in an helpless condition. Being thus publicly

adopted and owned, he was by all esteemed, honored, and called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

§4. It may be inquired by what means (supposing Moses to be carried to Pharaoh's daughter presently after he was weaned, and thenceforth brought up in the court) by what means could he come to know his stock, race, and kindred, so as, upon all disadvantages, to cleave to them, to the relinquishment of his new *regal* relation? I answer,

1. He found himself *circumcised*, and so to belong to the circumcised people. Hereon God instructed him to inquire into the reason and nature of that distinguishing character; and so he learned that it was the token of God's covenant with the people, the posterity of Abraham, of whom he was; it was a blessed inlet into the knowledge and fear of the true God. And whatever is pretended by some to the contrary, it is a most eminent divine privilege to have the *seal of the covenant* in baptism communicated to the children of believers in their infancy; and a means it hath been to preserve many from fatal apostasies.

2. His *nurse*, who was his *mother*, was frequently with him, and probably his father, on the same account. Whether they were ever known to the Egyptians to be his parents, I very much question. But there is no doubt that they, truly fearing God, and solicitous about his eternal condition, took care to communicate to him the principles of true religion, with a detestation of the *Egyptian idolatries* and superstition.

3. The notoriety of the fact was continually before him. It was known to all Egypt that he was of an Hebrew extraction, and nonincorporated into the royal family of the Egyptians. Hereon he considered what these two people were, what was the difference between them; and quickly found which of them was

the people of God, and how they came to be so. By these means his mind was inlaid with the principles of faith and the true religion, before he was given up to learn the wisdom of the Egyptians, and before the temptation from wealth, power, and glory had any powerful influence on his affections.

§5. Our next inquiry is, *When* did Moses refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter? Whereas it is the internal frame and act of his mind that is here intended, it is not to be confined to any particular outward action, much less to that which fell not out until he was full forty years old, Acts viii, 23; and before which it is said, that he owned the Israelites for his brethren; "He went out to his brethren and looked on their burdens," Exod. ii, 11; which he could not do without a resolution to relinquish his relation to Pharaoh's daughter.

Wherefore his refusal consisted in the sedate *resolution of his mind*, not to abide in that state, wherein to he was brought by his adoption, by faith, prayer, and trust in God; for this refusal was undoubtedly an act and fruit of faith, the power of which is here given as an instance; no doubt, but as he had occasion he conversed with his brethren, not only owning himself to be of their *stock* and race, but also of their faith and *religion*, and to belong to the same covenant; where there was no longer a consistency between his faith and profession to be continued with his station in the court, he openly and fully fell off from all respect to his adoption, and joined himself to the other people, as we shall see in the following verse.

§6. "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." There are two things to be considered in these words; *first*, that there were at this time two

things proposed to Moses;—the people of God in their afflicted state, and—the enjoyments of the pleasure of sin for a season, *secondly*, the determination he made, as to his own interest and concernment.

“He chose rather,” &c. (τῷ λαῷ τῆ θεοῦ) *with the people of God*; that is, the Hebrews, who were called so in contradistinction to all other people and nations whatever, by virtue of that special covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed throughout all generations; the token whereof they bare in their flesh.

This people of God is proposed to Moses as under *affliction*, so that if he will join himself to them, it must be with a participation of the outward evils they were subject to; the word (συγκαταχεῖσθαι) is used only in this place; and signifies to be *vexed and pressed with things evil* and grievous. What were the afflictions and sufferings of the people of God at that time is well known, but it does not appear that it was required of *him* to work in the kilns and furnaces with his brethren; only considering their woful condition, he cast his lot among them to take that portion which fell to his share, according to the guidance of divine Providence.

§7. That which is proposed in opposition hereto was, (προσκαιρον εχειν αμαρτιας απολαυσιν) *to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*; to have the temporary (απολαυσις) *fruition* or enjoyment of sin; and the word is usually applied to signify such a fruition as hath gust and relish; this enjoyment of sin is said to be (προσκαιρος) *temporary*, for a season; subject to thousand interruptions in this life, and unavoidably ending with it; thus were things truly represented to the thoughts of Moses; he did not hide his eyes from the worst on the one hand; nor did he suffer himself to be imposed upon by flattering appearances on the

other; he omitted no circumstances that might influence a right judgment in his choice; he considered the worst of the people of God, which is their affliction, and the best of the world, which is but the evanid pleasure of sin; and prefers the worst of the one above the best of the other.

§8. (Μαλλον ελομενος) *choosing rather*; they were proposed to his elective faculty; he could not enjoy the good things of them both, but adhering to the one, he must renounce the other; if he cleave to the treasures of Egypt, he must renounce the people of God, and if he joined himself to the people of God, he must renounce all his interest in Egypt; this he saw necessary from that profession which God required of him, and from the nature of the promise which that profession respected.

§9. "Esteeming (τον ονειδισμον τε Χριστου) *the reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" this must be the same with what he calls "being afflicted with the people of God," in the verse foregoing, only with an addition of a consideration under which it is peculiarly eligible.

(Ο Χριστος) *Christ*, is never used for any *type* of Christ. The immediate reason of the persecution of the Israelites was, because they would not coalesce into one people with the Egyptians, but still would retain and abide by their distinct interest and hopes; now their perseverance herein was grounded on their faith in the promise to Abraham concerning Christ; from the first promise concerning the exhibition of the Son of God in the flesh, *Christ* was the life and the soul of the church in all ages; for from him all was derived, and in him all centred; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever; a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. All the persecutions of the church arose from the enmity between the two *seeds*

which entered upon the first promise of Christ; and the adherence of believers to that promise is the grand cause of that separation from the world, which is the immediate cause of all their perseverance; wherefore, the *reproach of Christ* in the first place, signifies the reproach which, upon the *account* of Christ, or their *faith* in him, they underwent; for all outward observances in the church in all ages are but the profession of that faith; Christ and the church were considered from the beginning as one *mystical body*; so that what the one underwent, the other is esteemed to undergo the same. Hence it is said, that in all their afflictions, he was afflicted, Isa. lxiii, 9, and our apostle calls his own sufferings, that which is behind of the *afflictions of Christ*, Col. i, 24; viz. what belonged to the full allotment of sufferings to that mystical body whereof Christ is the head; and in this sense also the afflictions of the church are those of Christ, Gal. vi, 17. All the sufferings of the people of God for the sake of Christ are called *his reproach*; the foundation of them all is laid in *reproach*; the world can neither justify nor countenance itself in its persecutions of the church, unless they first cover it all over with reproaches; so they dealt with our Lord himself.

§10. (Τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ θησαυρῶν) "*the treasures of Egypt*;" *treasures* properly are *riches* in gold, silver, precious stones, and other valuables that are laid up; but when the treasures of a *nation* are mentioned, they include all the profits and advantages of it whence those treasures are gathered; in both respects Egypt, when in its flourishing state, was behind no kingdom in the world; he considered what they were, what they would amount to, what might be done with them, or attained by them, and prefers the "*reproach of Christ*" above them all; "he esteemed the

reproach of Christ to be (μειζονα πλεον) *greater riches*;" *riches*, opulency, wealth, contain all that men have and value in this world; all that they desire and place their happiness in; at least so far as that they judge they cannot be happy without them; that which is the principal means of all the ends of life; and an abundance of it.

§11. "For he had respect unto the recompence of reward;" (ωπεβλεπε, *intuitus est*) *he looked on*; he saw by the eyes of faith, as represented in the promise; he took into consideration, (την μισθοποδοσιαν) "*the recompence of reward*;" (*præmii retributionem, largitionem, mercedis, redditionem*) the gratuitous reward that God hath annexed to faith and obedience, not merited or desired by them, but infallibly annexed to them, in a way of sovereign bounty. The apostle gives us here a pregnant instance of that description of faith which he gave us in the first verse of the chapter;—that it was the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," for both these were seen conspicuously in this faith of Moses; it gave him an evidence of the invisible things of the eternal reward; and caused them so to subsist in their power and foretaste in his mind, as that he preferred them above all things. That this recompence of reward principally respects the eternal reward of persecuted believers in heaven, is out of question; but—whereas God in his gracious covenant is a present reward to them, Gen. xv, 1; and in the present keeping of his commandments there is a great reward, Psal. xix, 11, as also that the spiritual wisdom, grace, mercy, and consolation believers receive in this world, are riches, treasures, and durable substances—I doubt not that the blessed peace, rest, and satisfaction which they have in a comfortable persuasion of their covenant interest in God, are also included.

But even these also have their power and efficacy from their inseparable relation to the eternal reward; this *reward* compriseth three things,—he believed it upon divine revelation and promise,—he valued it according to its worth;—he brought it to the account, in the judgment which he was to make concerning the reproach of Christ and the treasures of Egypt; and this was the victory whereby he overcame the world, even his faith.

§12. (II.) Here we *observe* the ensuing particulars;

1. Whatever be the privileges of any, whatever be their work or office, it is by faith alone that they must live to God, and obtain acceptance with him. The lawgiver Moses himself was justified by faith.

2. It is good to fill up every age and season with the duties which are proper to it; and it is the duty of all young persons, that, according as they come to the knowledge of what is required of them, they apply themselves vigorously and diligently to the same. “Moses, when he was come to years,” &c.

3. It is a blessed thing to have the principles of true religion fixed in the minds of children, and their affections engaged to them, before they are exposed to temptations from learning, wisdom, wealth or preferment; and the negligence of most parents herein, who have none of those difficulties in the discharge of their duty, which the parents of Moses had, is a treachery which they must be accountable for.

4. The token of God’s covenant received in infancy being duly considered, is the most effectual means to preserve persons in the profession of true religion against apostasy by outward temptations.

5. The work of faith in all ages of the church, as to its nature, efficacy, and method of acting, is uniformly the same; the first act of faith purely evangeli-



cal is *self denial*, Matt, xvi, 24; Luke ix, 23; and what greater instance of it, Jesus Christ only excepted, can be given since the foundation of the world, than what is here recorded of Moses?

§13. 1. Let no man be offended at the low, mean, persecuted condition of the church at any time; the sovereign wisdom of God, in disposing the outward state and condition of his people in this world, is to be submitted to.

2. The church in all its distresses is ten thousand times more honorable than any other society of men in the world; they are the *people of God*.

3. In a time of great temptations, especially from furious persecutors, a sedate consideration of the true nature of the things wherein we are concerned, and their circumstances on every hand, is necessary to enable us for a right choice of our lot, and a due performance of our duty.

4. No profession will endure the trial in a time of persecution, but such as proceeds from a determinate choice of adhering to Christ and the gospel, with a rejection of whatever stands in competition with them, on a due consideration of the respective natures and ends of the things proposed to us on both hands. Moses chose to be afflicted with the people of God; and so must every one do, who will be of that number to his advantage; many would have *him*, but not with his *cross*; and his *gospel*, but not with its *burden*. And of the same *Samaritan* sect there are multitudes in every age; but those who will not have their afflictions, shall never have their privileges; and so it is all one whether they profess themselves to belong to them or no.

§14. And we may further *observe*,

1. That reproach hath in all ages from the begin-

ning of the world, attended Christ and all the sincere professors of faith in him, which in God's esteem is upon his account.

2. Let the things of this world be increased and multiplied into the greatest measure and degree imaginable, it alters not their kind; they are temporary, fading and perishing still; such as will stand men in no stead on their greatest occasions.

3. That there is an all satisfactory fulness in spiritual things, even when the enjoyment of them is under reproach and persecution.

4. Signal exemplifications of the nature and efficacy of faith in others, specially when victorious against mighty oppositions, as in Moses, are high encouragements to us, for the like exercise of it in the like circumstances.

§15. We may further learn;

1. That it is our duty in the whole course of our faith and obedience, to have respect unto the future recompence of reward; but especially in times of great persecution wherein we are sharers. A respect—not to what we shall *deserve* by what we suffer, nor to what *principally* influenceth us to obedience or suffering, nor as if there were between the reward and what we do any *proportion*, like that between work and wages; but—what Divine bounty hath proposed to us for our encouragement, which becomes the Divine goodness and righteousness freely to grant to the believing and obedient.

2. It is faith only that can carry us through the difficulties, trials, and persecutions which we may be called to for the sake and name of Christ; Moses himself with all his wisdom, learning, courage, and resolution, had never been able to have gone through with his trials

and difficulties, had not *faith* had the rule and government of his heart.

3. Faith in exercise will carry us safely through all trials which we have to undergo for Christ and the gospel; consider all circumstances, and it is almost impossible that our temptations and trials should be *greater* than those of Moses; yet *faith* carried him through them all.

4. Faith is *highly rational* in all its acts of obedience towards God; it reckoneth, computeth, judgeth, chooseth and determineth in the most exalted acts of reason; all these things were here ascribed to Moses in the exercise of his faith; and if we cannot prove—that the *wisdom of faith* and the *reason* wherein it always acts, are the most eminent that our nature is capable of in this world, and that whatever is contrary to them, or inconsistent with them, is *arrant folly*, and contrary to the *primogenial light* of our natures, and all the principles of reason truly so called; we shall freely give up the cause of faith to the vainest pretences of reason that foolish men can make.

#### VERSE 27.

*By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the kings for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.*

§1. The faith of Moses in forsaking Egypt. His remarkable courage. §2. His constancy. §3. The object of his faith and courage. §4. Observations.

§1. **T**HE fact which the apostle here intends was accompanied with, or immediately followed by Moses keeping the passover, which was forty years and somewhat more after his first flight out of Egypt; wherefore, although the *leaving of Egypt* may be a general expression of his whole conducting of the people thence into the wilderness, yet the apostle hath a peculiar respect to what is recorded, Exod. x, 28, 29.

"And Pharaoh said unto him, get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in the day that thou seest my face thou shalt die; and Moses said, thou has spoken well; I will see thy face again no more;" never was there an higher expression of faith and spiritual courage; whence it is said, *Exod. xi, 8*; "that he threatened Pharaoh, that all his servants should come and bow down before him;" and so went out from him in great anger, or the height of indignation at his obstinate rebellion against God; he had before him a bloody tyrant, armed with all the power of Egypt, threatening him with present death, if he persisted in the work and duty which God had committed to him; but he was so far from being terrified, or declining his duty in the least, that he professeth his resolution to proceed, and denounceth destruction to the tyrant himself. Faith will not move without a divine word for its warranty; and natural courage would not carry him out in his undertaking; but now being assured of his call as well as of his work, he is bold as a lion through the power of faith acting regularly on a word of promise and command.

§2. "He endured as seeing him who is invisible." (*Κατέπεσεν, forti animo sum, non cedo malis*) to endure, is a word singularly suited to express the frame of mind that was in Moses, with respect to his work of faith in leaving Egypt; for he met with a long course of various difficulties, and was often threatened by the king; besides what he had to cope with from the unbelief of the people; but he strengthened and confirmed his heart with spiritual courage, and resolution to abide in his duty to the end; and as the verb (*κατέπεσεν*) to endure, is used sometimes with a dative, sometimes an accusative case, sometimes with prepositions (*προς, επι, εν*) and sometimes without; so it is also *neutrally*,

without affecting any other persons or things; wherefore this enduring by faith is not a mere bare continuance in duty; but it is an abiding in it with courage and resolution, without fear and despondency.

§3. That which preserved Moses in this frame, was, that he saw the invisible God; (*τον αορατον ως ορατον*) *as seeing him who is invisible*; God is said to be *invisible* in respect of his essence; Rom. i, 20; Col. i, 15; 1 Tim. i, 17; but there is a peculiar reason of this description of him here; Moses was in that state and condition, and had those things to do, wherein he continually stood in need of divine power and assistance; whence this should proceed he could not discern by his senses; his bodily eye could behold no present assistant, for God was invisible; and it requires a special act of the mind in expecting help from him who cannot be seen; wherefore he saw him by faith whom he could not see with his eyes; "*As seeing*," he represented him a present help, no less than if he had been seen. A double act of Moses' faith is intended herein;—a clear distinct view and apprehension of God in his omnipresence, power, and faithfulness; and—a fixed trust in him on their account, at all times and on all occasions. This he rested on, this he trusted to, that God was every where present with him, able to protect him, and faithful to his promise; which is the sum of the revelation he made of himself to Abraham, Gen. xv, 1; and xvii, 1; hereof he had as certain a persuasion, as if he had seen God working with him and for him with his bodily eyes. This sight of God he continually retreated to, in all his hazards and difficulties, and thereon endured courageously to the end.

§4. Hence we may *observe*;

1. In all duties, especially such as are attended with great difficulties and dangers, it is the wisdom of

believers to take care not only that the works be good in themselves, but also that they have a just and due call to their performance.

2. Even the wrath of the greatest kings is to be disregarded, if it lie against our duty towards God, Dan. iii, 13—18.

3. There is an heroic frame of mind and spiritual fortitude required to the due discharge of our callings in times of danger, and which faith in exercise will produce, 1 Cor. xvi, 13.

4. There is nothing insuperable to faith, whilst it can keep a clear view of the power of God and his faithfulness in his promises. And unless we are constant in this exercise, we shall faint and fail in great trials and difficult duties. From hence we may fetch revivings and renewals of strength and comfort on all occasions, as the scripture every where testifieth, Psalm lxxiii, 25, 26; Isa. xl, 28, 30.

#### VERSE 28.

*By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first born should touch them.*

§1. Moses keeps the passover by faith; and §2. The sprinkling of blood. §3. The end of the institution. §4. Of what a sign. §5. Observations.

§1. **T**HE first thing ascribed to him as the fruit of faith is, that he “kept the passover.” The word (*πεποιηκε*) is of a large signification; he *wrought*, he *performed* the whole sacred duty; that is, of killing the passover, and sprinkling the blood. “The *passover*.” The word is of an Hebrew original, only used by the Greeks after the Chaldee dialect, wherein it is usual to add (א) *aleph* to the end of words. So from the Hebrew (פסח) to *pass over* by a kind of *leaping*, came the Chaldee (אפסח) and the Greek (πασχα.) The word

was chosen to intimate the *manner* of the distinction God made by the destroying angel between the houses of the Egyptians and the Israelites, when he *passed over* the one untouched, and entered into another, (it may be sometimes the next to it) with death. The apostle expressly calls Christ, "*our passover*, sacrificed for us," 1 Cor. v, 7. He and his sacrifice was that really and substantially, whereof the paschal lamb was a typical sign and shadow.

§2. The second thing ascribed to the faith of Moses, is, (την προσχυσιν) *the sprinkling of blood*. This, whether it were a peculiar temporary ordinance, or an observance annexed to the first celebration of the passover, is all to the same purpose. The blood of the lamb was preserved in a bason, from whence they were to take it by dipping a bunch of hyssop into it, verse 22; and strike it on the two *side posts*, and the *upper door posts* of their houses. And this was to be a token unto them that God would *pass over* the houses that were so sprinkled and marked with blood, that none should be destroyed in them, verse 13; and this in its mystical signification was to abide for ever.

§3. The end of this institution was, "that he who destroyed the first born might not touch them." (Ολοθρευων, or ολοθρευτης, 1 Cor. x, 10;) that is, an angel whom God employed in that work as the executioner of his judgments, as he did afterwards in the destruction of Sennacherib's army; and before in that of Sodom. There is no work more holy, nor more becoming the holy ministering spirits than to execute the judgments of God on impenitent sinners. I grant, that in the infliction of the plagues of the Egyptians in general, especially in the work of hardening their hearts, and seducing them to their deserved destruction, God made use of evil angels; "He sent evil angels among them,"

Psalm lxxviii, 49. But this work of slaying their first born is so peculiarly and frequently ascribed to God himself, that I rather judge he employed a *good angel* therein. "He destroyed the *first born*;" (*τα πρωτοτονα*) the *first things* that were born; in the neuter gender, (i. e. *γυνήματα*.) For the destruction was intended to the first born of *beasts* as well as of men, Exod. xii, 29; and this was done *at the same time* throughout all the land of Egypt, that is, about midnight, Exod. xi, 4; and xii, 29, 30.

§4. "Lest he that destroyeth the first born should touch them;" namely, that it might be a sign and token to the Israelites, that they should be preserved from that woful destruction which they knew would, that night, befall the Egyptians; Exod. xii, 13, "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are." And what is added, that when he did see the blood, he would pass over them, and the plague should not come nigh them, was only to oblige them with all diligence and reverence to observe his sacred institution. For their deliverance was suspended on that condition, and had any of them failed herein, they should have perished with the Egyptians. (*Μη θίγῃ αὐτῶν*) *shall not touch them*; that is, the Israelites or their cattle. Not *touch* them; to declare the *absolute security* which they were to enjoy whilst the Egyptians were smitten. The destroyer made no approach to their houses, they had no fear of him. So "not to touch," is used for doing no harm; or being remote from it; Psalm cv, 15, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." 1 John v, 18, "The wicked one toucheth him not."

§5. Hence observe:

1. There is always an especial exercise of faith re-

VOL. IV,

31



quired to the due observance of a sacramental ordinance.

2. Whatever is not sprinkled with the blood of Christ the lamb of God, who was slain and sacrificed for us, is exposed to destruction from the anger and displeasure of God:

3. And this alone is that which gives us security from him that hath the power of death. See *Expos.* on chap. ii, 14, 15.

4. God hath always instruments in readiness to execute the severest of his judgments on sinners in their greatest security. They were all in their midnight sleep in Egypt, when this messenger of death came amongst them.

5. Such is the great power and activity of these fiery ministering spirits, as that in the shortest space of time imaginable they can execute the judgments of God on whole nations, as well and as easily as on private persons, 2 Kings xix, 35.

6. That which God would for ever instruct the church in by this ordinance, is, that unless we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, our paschal Lamb, no other privilege can secure us from eternal destruction. Though a man had been really an Israelite, and had with others made himself ready that night for a departure, which was an high profession of faith, yet if the *lintel* and *posts* of his door had not been sprinkled with blood, he would have been destroyed.

#### VERSE 29.

*By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land, which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned.*

§1. (1) The words explained. The Israelites by faith passing the Red Sea.  
 §2. Why so called. §3. The passage itself. §4. The fate of the Egyptians.  
 §5—6. (II.) Observations.

§1. (I.) (ΔΙΕΒΗΞΑΝ) *they passed*; that is, the whole congregation of the Israelites under the conduct of

Moses, Exod. xiv; and the *whole* is denominated from the *better part*, for many of them were not believers to the sanctification of their persons. For with many of them, as the apostle speaks, God was not well pleased, though they were "all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," 1 Cor. x, 2—5. But in a *professing society*, God is pleased to ascribe the faith and obedience of some to the whole; as on the other hand, judgments oftentimes fall on the whole for the provocations of some, as it frequently happened to the people in the wilderness. It is therefore the duty of every man in the church to endeavor, on the one hand, the good of the whole in his own personal faith and obedience; as also on the other, to keep them as far as lies in him from sin, that he fall not with them under the displeasure of God. -

§2. It was (τὴν ἐρυθρὰν θάλασσαν) the *Red Sea* they passed through; that part of the Ethiopic ocean which lieth between Egypt and Arabia. In the Hebrew it is constantly called (הַיָּם סוּף) the *sea of sedges*, reeds or canes, from the multitude of them growing on its shore, as to this day. The Greeks call it (ἐρυθραῖος or ἐρυθρά) *red*; not from the red color of the waters, appearing so from the sand or the sun, as some have fancied; but from Erythraeus; that is, Esau or Edom, who fixed his habitation and rule towards this sea. And whereas that name (*Edom*) signifies *red*, they gave him a name of the same signification in their language. Thence came the sea among them to be called the "*Red Sea*," which the Hebrews call *Jam Syph*.

§3. It is said, that they passed through (ὡς διὰ ξερᾶς) *as on dry land*, Exod. xiv, 21, 22—29. The ground was made fit for them to travel on, and they passed the waters without any impediment. The division of the waters was very great, leaving a space for so great a

multitude to pass in an orderly manner between the divided parts; perhaps to the distance of some miles. And their passage is judged to have been *six leagues* from shore to shore, and by some much larger. The Israelites had light to discern this miraculous appearance, which, no doubt, was very dreadful. The waters must of necessity be raised to a very great height on each side: and although they were, by the power of God, a wall to them on the right and left; yet was it an high act of faith in them, to put themselves between such walls, as were ready in their own nature to fall on them to their destruction every moment, abiding only under an almighty restraint. But they had the command and promise of God for their warranty and security, which will enable faith to overcome all fears and dangers. I doubt not but that Moses himself first entered at the head of them. Hence it is said, that God led them through the sea "at the right hand of Moses," Isa. lxiii, 11—13; he entering before them into the channel of the deep, to guide and encourage them.

§4. It remains that we consider the other people, *the Egyptians*; so they are called here in general; but in the account given us by Moses, it appears that Pharaoh himself, the king, was present in person, with all the nobility and power of this kingdom. It was he, in an especial manner, whom God had undertaken to deal with, Exod. ix, 16; Rom. ix, 17; Exod. xv, 3—9. This Pharaoh, with his Egyptians, that is, his whole army, horses and chariots, also attempted; (*πειραν λοβοντες*) *assaying to do*; which was the greatest height that ever obdurate infidels could arise to in this world. They had seen all the mighty works which God had wrought in behalf of his people among them; they and their country were almost con-

sumed with the plagues and judgments that were inflicted on them on their account. And yet, now beholding this wonderful work of God, in opening the sea to receive them from their pursuit, they would *make a venture* (as the word signifies) to follow them into it. Vain and desperate attempt, and an high evidence of infatuation! Here we have one of the most signal examples of the power of unbelief, confirmed by judiciary hardness of heart, that is upon record in the whole book of God; nor is there any monument of equal folly and blindness among the annals of time. The event was, that they (*καταβυθίσαντες*) *were drowned*, swallowed up. The account hereof is given us so gloriously in the triumphant song of Moses, *Exod. xv*; that nothing needs to be added for its farther illustration. And this destruction of the Egyptians, with the deliverance of Israel, was a type and pledge of the victory and triumph which the church shall have over its anti-christian adversaries, *Rev. xv, 2—5*.

§5. (II.) *Observe hence,*

1. Where God engaged his word and promise, there is nothing so difficult, nothing so remote from the rational apprehensions of men, but he may righteously require our faith and trust in him therein.

2. Faith will find a way through a sea of difficulties under the call of God.

3. There is no trial, no difficulty, that the church can be called to, but there are examples on record of the power of faith in working out its deliverance. There can be no greater strait than the Israelites were in between the host of the Egyptians and the Red Sea.

§6. 1. God knows how to secure impenitent sinners to their appointed destruction, by giving them up to hardness of heart, and an obstinate continuance. *in*

their sins against all warnings and means of repentance, see Rom. i, 24—32.

2. God doth not give up any judicial way to sin, but it is a punishment for preceding sins, and as a means to bring on them total ruin and destruction.

3. Let us not wonder that we see men in the world obstinate in foolish counsels and undertakings, tending to their own inevitable ruin, seeing probably they are under judicial hardness from God, Isa. vi, 9, 10; and xxix, 10; and xix, 13, 14.

4. There is no such blinding, hardening lust in the minds of men as hatred of God's people, and desire of their ruin. Where this prevails, as it did in these persecuting Egyptians, it deprives men of all wisdom and understanding, that they shall do things against all rules of reason and polity, (which commonly they pretended to) act brutishly and obstinately, though apparently tending to their own ruin and destruction. These Egyptians designed the utter extirpation of the people, that they should be no more in the world, by their edict for the destruction of all the male children, which in one age would have totally exterminated them out of Egypt; yet now they will run themselves on imminent universal destruction; to bring them back again into Egypt.

5. When the oppressors of the church are nearest to their ruin, they commonly rage most, and are most obstinate in their bloody persecutions.

#### VERSE 80.

*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days.*

§1. The faith of Israel at Jericho. §2. After it was compassed about seven days.  
§3. How this manifested their faith. §4. Observations.

§1. **I**N this verse the apostle adds another instance of the faith of the whole congregation in the sense before

declared; for although respect be had, no doubt, to the faith of Joshua in an especial manner, yet that of the whole people is expressed. The city itself was not great, as is evident, because the whole army of the Israelites did compass it seven times in one day; but most probably it was fortified and encompassed with walls of great height and strength, with which the spies sent by Moses out of the wilderness were terrified, Numb. xiii, 28; and it is uncertain how long it was besieged by the Israelites, before God shewed them the way to demolish the walls; for the town was beleaguered by Joshua it may be for some good while before he had the command to compass it, Joshua vi, 1;—these walls, saith the apostle, (*επεσε*) *fell down*; or as in Joshua ver. 20, *Heb.* “*The wall fell down under it.*” It intimates the utter casting it *down flat* on the earth, whereby the people went over it with ease into the city; yet need not this be so far extended, as that no part of it was left standing; for that part of it, for instance, whereon the house of Rahab was built, was probably left standing; but the fall was such as took away all defence from the inhabitants, and facilitated the entrance of the Israelites in various places at once.

§2. This, saith the apostle, was done after they were “compassed about seven days,” Josh. vi, 2, 3. The first command of God was to have it done *six times* in the space of *six days*, ver. 3; but an especial command and direction was given for that of the *seventh day*, because it was to be done then *seven times*, ver. 4. This seventh day probably was the sabbath; and some mystery is, no doubt, intimated in the number *seven* in this place. The reader may, if he pleases, consult our discourse of the original and institution of the sabbath, wherein these things are spoken to.

§3. And some things there are wherein the Israelites did manifest their *faith* therein.

1. It was on the *command of God*, and his promise of success, that they now entered the land of Canaan, and began their work and war with the siege of this strong town, not having, by any previous fight, weakened the inhabitants. Here they made the first experiment of the presence of God with them in the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham.

2. They shewed their faith in their readiness to comply with the way prescribed, of compassing the town so many days with the noise of trumpets, without the least attempt to possess it; for without a respect by faith to the command and promise of God, this act was so far from furthering them in their design, that it was suited to expose them to the scorn and contempt of their adversaries; this way was prescribed to them of God to give them a distinct apprehension, that the work of the conquest of Canaan was *his*, and not *theirs*.

3. The same faith is manifest in the *triumphant shout* they gave, *before* the walls in the least moved; they used the *sign* of their downfall before the thing signified was accomplished; and *triumphed* by faith in the ruin of the walls, whilst they stood in their full strength; wherefore the apostle might justly commend their faith, which was acted against so many difficulties, in the use of unlikely means.

§4. Hence we may *observe*;

1. Faith will make use of means divinely prescribed, though it be not able to discern the effective influence of them to the end aimed at, see 2 Kings v, 14.

2. Faith will cast down walls and strong towers that lie in the way of the work of God; it is true, we have no stone walls to demolish, nor cities to destroy; but

the same faith in exercise is required of us in all our concerns, as was in Joshua when he entered on the conquest of Canaan, as the apostle declares, chap. xiii, 5, and there are strong holds of sin in our minds, which nothing but faith can cast to the ground.

VERSE 31.

*By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that believed not, when she received the spies with peace.*

§1. The history and faith of Rahab, contained in several propositions. She was a Gentile, an Amorite, an harlot, yet converted to God. §2. Made an excellent confession of her faith. §3. Joined God's people. §4. Shewed her faith by her works. §5. The fruit of her faith. §6. Observations.

§1. **T**HE story concerning this Rahab, her faith and works, is at large recorded in Joshua, chap. ii, vi. What concerns the exposition of these words, and the great instance of the grace of God, and efficacy of faith in them, may be comprised in some *remarks*.

1. Rahab was by nature a *Gentile*, an alien from the stock and covenant of Abraham; wherefore, as her conversion to God was an act of free grace and mercy in a peculiar manner, so it was a type and pledge of calling a church from among the Gentiles.

2. She was not only a Gentile, but an *Amorite*; of that race which in general was devoted to utter destruction; she was therefore an instance of God's *sovereignty* in dispensing with his positive laws, as it seems good unto him; for of his own mere pleasure he exempted her from the doom denounced against all those of her origin.

3. She was (*ἡ πόρνῃ*) an *harlot*, though it may be not one that commonly and promiscuously exposed herself; (*הונָה nobili scortum*;) that she kept a *public house of entertainment*, is evident from the spies going thither; which they did as to such a house; and herein



have we a blessed instance both of the sovereignty of God's grace, and of its power. No person, no sin, is to be despaired of, in whose cure sovereign almighty grace is engaged, 1 Cor. vi, 9—11.

4. She was *converted to God* before the coming of the *spies* to her, by what she had *heard* of him; his mighty works, and his peculiar owning of the people of Israel; for God had ordained and designed that the report of these things should be an effectual ordinance, both to terrify obstinate believers, also to call others to repentance, and conversion from their idols; to which end, no doubt, it was effectual on others as well as on Rahab; as it was on the *Gibeonites* in general. Hence those who perish are said to be *unbelievers*; she perished not with "them that believed not," or who were disobedient; for they had a sufficient revelation of God and his will necessary to their faith and obedience; and their destruction is ascribed to the hardening of their hearts, so that they should not make peace with Israel, Josh. xi, 19, 20.

§2. Rahab upon this first opportunity made an *excellent confession* of her faith, and of the means of her conversion to God. This confession is recorded at large, Josh. ii, 9—11. She avows the Lord Jehovah to be the only God in heaven above and in the earth beneath; wherein she renounced all the idols which before she had worshipped; ver. 11, and she avows her faith in him as the God of Israel, who had taken them to be his people by promise and covenant, which in this confession she lays hold on by faith; "the Lord your God, he is God," Rom. x, 10.

§3. She separated herself from the *cause and interest* of her own people among whom she lived, and joined herself to the cause and interest of the people of God; this also is a necessary fruit of faith, and an

inseparable concomitant of profession; this God called her to, this she complied with, and this was that which rendered all she did in receiving, concealing and preserving the spies, though they came to destroy her country and people, just and warrantable.

§4. She shewed her faith by her works; "She received the spies with peace." In these few words the apostle comprises the whole story of her receiving them; her studiously concealing them; the intelligence she gave them, the prudence she used, the pains she took, and the danger she underwent in the safe conveyance of them to their army; all which are at large recorded, Josh. ii, see also James ii. Again, it was a work of *great use* and importance to the church and cause of God; for had these spies been taken and slain, it would have been a great discouragement to the whole people, and made them question whether God would be with them in their undertaking or no; and it is evident that the tidings which they carried to Joshua, and the people, from the intelligence which they had by Rahab, was a mighty encouragement to them; for they report their discovery in *her words*; they said unto Joshua, "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us," Josh. ii, 24; and it was a work accompanied with the utmost hazard and danger to herself; had the matter been discovered, doubtless she, and all she possessed, had been utterly destroyed; and all these things set a great lustre upon this work, whereby she evidenced her faith and her justification; and as this is an instance exceedingly apposite to the purpose of the apostle, to arm and encourage believers against the difficulties and dangers which they were to meet with in their profession; so it is sufficient to condemn multitudes

among ourselves, who, after a long profession of the truth, are ready to tremble at the first approach of danger, and think it their wisdom to keep at a distance from such as are exposed to danger and sufferings.

§5. The fruit of this faith of Rahab was, that *she perished not*, she was not destroyed; Josh. vi, 25, "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had, and she dwelt in Israel to this day." *Note*, it is good, and sometimes useful, to be *related* to them that believe; but what is added of her "dwelling in Israel" plainly intimates her solemn conjunction to the people of God in faith and worship; yea, I am persuaded that from henceforward she was as eminent in *faith and holiness*, as she had been before in *sin and folly*; for it was not for her *wealth* that she was afterwards married to Salmon the son of Naasson, the prince of the tribe of Juda, Matt. i, 5, becoming thereby to have the honor of a place in the genealogy of our blessed Savior, and of a type of the interest of the Gentiles in his incarnation. The Holy Ghost also taking occasion twice to mention her in a way of commendation, and proposing her as an example of faith and obedience, gives such an approbation of her, as testifies her to have been eminent and exemplary in these things.

§6. The following *observations* offer;

1. Although unbelief be not the only destroying sin, (for the wages of every sin is death, and many are accompanied with peculiar provocations) yet it is the only sin which makes eternal destruction inevitable and remediless. And,
2. Where there are means granted of the revelation of God and his will, unbelief is the greatest and most provoking thing, and from whence God is glorified in his severest judgment. And,

3. Where this revelation of the mind and will of God is most open, full, and evident, and the means of it are most express, and suited to the communication of the knowledge of it, *there is the highest aggravation of unbelief.* If the inhabitants of Jericho perished in their unbelief, because they *believed* not the report that was brought to them of the mighty works of God; what will be the end of them who live and die in their unbelief under the daily, constant preaching of the gospel, the most glorious revelation of the mind and will of God for the salvation of men! Heb. ii, 9.

4. Every thing which God designs as an ordinance to bring men to repentance, ought to be diligently attended to and complied with, seeing the neglect of the call of God therein shall be severely revenged. Such were his mighty works in those days; and such are his judgments in all ages.

5. It is in the nature of true, real, saving faith, immediately, or at its first opportunity, to declare and protest itself in confession before men; or confession is absolutely inseparable from faith, and the fearful, *that is, those who fly from public profession in times of danger and persecution,* shall be no less assuredly excluded from the heavenly Jerusalem, than unbelievers themselves, Rev. xxi, 8.

6. A separation from the carnal cause and interest of the world is required in all believers, and will accompany true faith wherever it is.

VERSE 32.

*And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.*

§1. Connexion and general remarks. §2. Exposition. §3. How does it appear that it was by faith these persons acted? §4. Especially in their heroic actions, how they could be examples to us. §5. Observations.

§1. **I**N this verse, and to end of ver. 38, he sums up the remaining testimonies, which out of many he insisted on, with intimation that there were yet more of the like kind upon record, which he would not so much as name.

We may here notice two things;

1. That in the *naming* of them, (Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthæ, David, and Samuel,) he doth not observe the order of time wherein they lived; for Barak was before Gideon, and Jephthæ before Sampson, and Samuel before David.

2. He doth not reckon up the *things* they did in the same order wherein he had named the persons; so as that the first thing mentioned should be ascribed to him that was first named, and so in order; but he useth his liberty in setting down both the names of the persons and of the things ascribed to them; and the things he mentioneth cannot all be absolutely applied to the persons named; but some of them were wrought by *others* whose names are not expressed. Having given this account of the scope and argument of the apostle, I shall be very brief in the exposition of the particulars.

§2. (*Και τι εἰς λεγῶ;*) *And what shall I say more?* Or, why do I farther speak? He had in readiness many more examples of the same kind. To multiply arguments and testimonies beyond what is necessary, serves only to divert the mind from attending to the truth itself to be confirmed; *for the time would fail me*; it would be a work of that length as would not be contained within the bounds which I have assigned to this epistle, should I so declare their faith and the fruits of it in particular, as I have done in the foregoing characters; yet he *so names* them as to bring them in *witness* in the cause.

§3. How doth it appear that it was by *faith* they performed the things ascribed to them?

1. They all, or at least most of them, had *special calls* from God to the works which they wrought. So had Gideon by an angel, Judg. vii, Barak by the prophecy of Deborah, Judg. iv; Sampson by the direction of an angel to his parents, Judg. xiii; so was it also, it is well known, with Samuel and David; they had their calls immediately from God; and as for Jephthæ, he was first chosen by the people to his office and work, Judg. xi, 11; which God approved of in giving him his Spirit in an extraordinary manner, ver. 29. They were satisfied in their call from God, and so trusted in him for his aid and assistance.

2. The work which they had to do was the *work of God*; namely, to deliver the church from trouble and oppression; and there was a *promise* annexed to their works, when undertaken according to the mind of God; yea, many promises to this purpose were left on record for their encouragement, Deut. xxxii, 36, &c. this promise they rested on by *faith* in all their undertakings.

3. Some of them, as Gideon, Barak, and David, had *particular promises* of success in what they were called to; and although at first they might be slow in believing them, yet in the issue their faith was victorious, and they "obtained the promises," as in the next verse.

On these grounds they wrought all their great works of faith, whereby they engaged the divine presence and assistance, and are therefore a meet example to be proposed for our encouragement.

§4. And though these examples were chiefly *heroic actions*, yet consider;

1. The faith whereby they wrought these great

things was of the same nature and kind with that which is in every true believer; wherefore, as it was effectual in them for those duties whereunto they were called, it will be so in us also, as to all we may be called to.

2. To destroy the kingdom of Satan in us, to demolish all his strong holds, to overcome the world in all its attempts on our eternal safety, will appear one day not to be inferior to the conquest of kingdoms, and overthrow of armies. See Eph. vi, 10—12, &c. And we may learn hence,—That it is not the dignity of the person that gives efficacy to faith, but faith makes the person accepted—That neither the guilt of sin, nor the sense of it, should hinder us from acting faith on God in Christ, when we are called to it—That true faith will save great sinners; for that they were all saved who are on this catalogue of believers, the apostle expressly affirms, verse 30.

§5. *Obs.* There is nothing so difficult or seemingly insuperable, no discouragement so great, from a sense of our own unworthiness by sin, nor opposition arising against us from both of them in conjunction, that should hinder us from believing when we are called to it.

#### VERSE 33—35.

*Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight; turned to flight the armies of the aliens; women received their dead raised to life again.*

§1. From the persons, the apostle proceeds to the things performed by faith. §2. They subdued kingdoms. What kingdoms, and how, by faith. §3. Wrought righteousness. §4. Obtained particular promises. §5. Stopped the mouths of lions. §6. Quenched the violence of fire. §7. Escaped the edge of the sword. §8. Some out of weakness were made strong. §9. Waxing valiant in fight. §10. Routed armies. §11. Women received their dead. §12. Observations:

§1. FROM the enumeration of *persons* that believed, the apostle proceeds to declare the *things* which they wrought by faith, all to the same end, to encourage us to make use of the same grace in all our occasions and emergencies. (*Δια πίστεως*) *through faith*; the same with (*πίστει*) *by faith*, all along in the chapter; an *instrumental* cause. The words are of common use, and there is no difference in the translation of them.

§2. The first thing ascribed to them is, that they "*subdued kingdoms*." The simple verb (*αγωνίζομαι*) signifies to *fight*, to *contend*, to enter into trial of strength and courage in the theatre or the field. And thence (*καταγωνίζομαι*) the word here used is to *prevail in battle*, to conquer, to subdue. "*They subdued kingdoms*." This is generally and rightly assigned to Joshua and David; Joshua subdued all the kingdoms of Canaan; and David, all those about it; as Moab, Ammon, Edom, Syria, and the Philistines. But it may be inquired, how this conquering of kingdoms should be a fruit and effect of *faith*? For the most of them who have subdued kingdoms in the world, have not only been *unbelievers*, but for the most part wicked and bloody *tyrants*. I say, therefore, that the kingdoms subdued by faith, were of two sorts:

1. Those *within* the land of Canaan, which were destroyed by Joshua; which had by their wickedness forfeited their land and lives to divine justice. Wherefore, God having given the country to the Israelites, they in the conquest of them only executed the judgments of God, taking possession of what was their own.

2. Such as were *about* that land which was the inheritance and possession of the church, and were enemies to the worship of the true God; such were theos



conquered by David. Now it was the will of God that they should be so far subdued, as that the land might be a quiet habitation to his people. Wherefore through faith they subdued these kingdoms; in that they did it on *God's command*, and in the accomplishment of his promises. The persons destroyed by them being devoted to destruction for their own sins, they did only execute the righteous judgment of God upon them. Again; it deserves farther notice, that although it was through *faith* they subdued kingdoms, yet they made use of all heroic virtues, such as courage, valor, military skill, and the like. Never, doubtless, were there on the earth, more valiant men than Joshua and David, nor were there any who underwent greater hardships and dangers in war. These things are perfectly consistent, yea, mutually helpful to one another; for as *faith* will excite all graces and virtues that are useful for any enterprize men are called to, so they, in their turns, are subservient to faith in what it is called to.

§3. The second thing ascribed to these worthies is, that through faith (εργασαντο δικαιοσυνην) "*they wrought righteousness.*" There is a threefold state of life, and corresponding thereto, a threefold righteousness; namely, *military*, *moral*, and *political*. In the *first* way, to "*work righteousness,*" is as much as to execute judgment, the judgment of God on the enemies of the church, Psalm cxlix, 6—9. In a *moral* sense it compriseth a respect to all the duties of the second table; and so (εργαζεσθαι δικαιοσυνην) *to work righteousness*, is the same with (ποιειν δικαιοσυνην) *to do righteousness*, 1 John iii, 7. To work righteousness in a *political* sense is to be righteous in rule and government, to administer justice and judgment to all that are under their rule. Now all the persons expressly

mentioned, being rulers and judges, and this righteousness being of such eminent use to the church and to the world, it is *that* most likely, which is here ascribed to them. See Psalm ci, throughout; and 1 Sam. vii, 15—17.

§4. It is said of them that they "*obtained promises.*" Sundry expositors have taken pains to reconcile this with what is said, ver. 39. As if "*they obtained,*" and "*they received not the promise,*" were contradictory. But they make a difficulty themselves where there is none; which when they have done, they cannot easily solve. For (ἐκίλυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν) *they obtained promises*, viz. the things peculiarly promised to them on particular occasions, may well consist with (ἐκ ἐκομισαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν) *they received not that great promise* of the coming of Christ in the flesh, in its actual accomplishment; wherefore the *promises* here intended, which by faith they obtained, were such as were made particularly to themselves. As to Joshua, that he should conquer Canaan; to Gideon, that he should defeat the Midianites; and to David, that he should be king over all Israel. And they are said to *obtain* these promises, because of the difficulty there was in their accomplishment, yea, and sometimes a seeming impossibility. How often was the faith of Joshua tried in the conquest of Canaan; yet at length he *obtained* the promise. Gideon was put on a great improbability, when he was commanded with *three hundred* men to set upon an innumerable host, and yet he obtained the promise of their destruction. And it is known how long, and by what various ways, the faith of David was tried and exercised, before the promise made to him was fulfilled.

§5. It is ascribed to them, that they "*stopped the mouths of lions;*" which may intend the preventing of

them from destroying and devouring by *any* means whatever. It is with their mouths that they devour; and he that hinders them from devouring, may well be said to stop their mouths. In this sense it may be ascribed to Sampson, who, when a young lion roared against him, approaching to devour him, he rent him to pieces, Judg. xiv, 5, 6. In like manner, David stopped the mouth of a lion, when he slew him, 1 Sam. xvii, 34, 35. But if the word be taken in its proper signification, to put a stop to the mouth of a lion, so that he shall neither hurt nor devour, though he be kept alive and at liberty, then it is applied to Daniel only; for so it is said of him expressly, when cast into the den of lions, that God had sent his angel, and "shut the lion's mouths," that they did not hurt him; Dan. vi, 22; and Daniel did it *by faith*; for although the ministry of angels was used therein, yet it was done, because he *believed* in his God, ver. 20.

§6. (Εσβεσαν δυναμιν πυρος) "*they quenched the violence of fire.*" He doth not say, they quenched *fire*, which may be done by natural means; but they took off, abated, restrained "the violence," the *power* of fire, as if the fire itself had been utterly quenched. This, therefore, belongs to the *three companions* of Daniel, who were cast into the burning fiery furnace, Dan. iii, 23. The fire continued still, and retained its burning power, for it slew the men that cast them into the furnace. But by faith they quenched or restrained the power and violence of it towards themselves, that not one hair of their head was singed, ver. 27. And the *faith* of these men consisted in their committing themselves to the omnipotence and sovereignty of God in the discharge of their duty.

§7. (Εφυγον σιματα μαχαίρας) "*They escaped the edge of the sword;*" the *mouths* of the sword from the He-

brew (טוֹ חֶרֶב) and a “two edged sword,” they call a “sword of mouths,” as in the Greek (μαχαίρα διόμορος, chap. iv, 12.) “*They escaped*” by *flight* from the danger. So was it frequently with David, when he fled from the sword of Saul, which was in a manner at his throat several times, and he “*escaped by flight*,” wherein God was with him. So did Elijah, when he was threatened to be slain by Jezebel, 1 Kings, xix, 3. It may be said, Was not this an effect of *fear* rather than of *faith*, with all its good success? No; for it is the wisdom and duty of faith, to apply itself to all lawful means and ways of deliverance from danger. Not to use means when God affords them to us, is not to trust but to *tempt* him. Fear will be in all cases of danger, and yet faith may have the principal conduct of the soul. And a *victory* is sometimes obtained by *flight*.

§8. Some of them, (ενεδυναμωθησαν απο ασθενειας) “*out of weakness were made strong*.” The term (ασθενεια) *weakness*, denotes any kind of infirmity, moral or corporeal. The words are taken almost literally out of Isaiah; “The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick, and *was recovered of his sickness*,” Isa. xxxviii, 9; and that this was through *faith* is evident in the story, and was in part miraculous.

§9. some of them through faith (εγενηθησαν ισχυροι εν πολεμω) *were made valiant*, waxed strong in fight or battle. As this may be applied to many of them, as Joshua, Barak, Gideon, Jephthæ, so David affirms of himself, that “God taught his hands to war, so that a bow of steel was broken by his arms; and that he girded him with strength unto battle,” Psal. xviii, 34—39, which answers to what is here affirmed.

§10. Of the same kind is that which followeth, (παρεμβολας εκλιναν αλλοτριων) “*They turned to flight the armies of the aliens*.” The original word (παρεμβολαι)

properly denotes *the camps*, the *fortified tents* of an army; but it is used for an *army* itself, 1 Sam. iv, 16; an *host encamped* like that of the Midianites when Gideon went down unto it, Judg. vii, 10; which overthrow of that host is here principally intended; for so it was signified in the dream, that the *tents* should be smitten and overturned, ver. 13. But because the apostle useth the word in the plural number, it compriseth other enterprises of the like nature, as that of Barak and Jonathan against the Philistines, with the victories of Asa and Jehoshaphat, in all which there was an eminent exercise of faith, as the stories of them declare. And these "*aliens*," were those whom the scripture calls (זָרִים) *strangers* from and *enemies* to the church of God.

§11. It is added, "Women received their dead raised to life again." These women were, the widow of *Zarephath*, whose son Elijah raised from death, 1 Kings, xvii, 17—24; and the *Shunamitess*, whose son was raised by Elisha, 2 Kings, iv, 33—36. And it is said of them, that they *received* their children from the dead; for in both places the prophets having raised them from the dead, gave them into their *mother's* arms, who received them with joy and thankfulness. *Their* faith is not expressed; but respect is rather had to the faith of the *prophets*, who obtained this miraculous operation by faith. However, at least one of them, the *Shunamitess*, seems to have exercised much faith in the whole matter. And it is said, they received their dead, (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως) *out of*, or, *by a resurrection*. These ten instances did the apostle choose to give, out of the great things that had been done through faith, to assure the Hebrews, and us with them, that there is nothing too hard or difficult for faith to effect, when it is set on work and applied according to the mind of God.

§12. We may now observe:

1. There is nothing that can lie in the way of the accomplishment of any of God's promises, but it is conquerable by faith. Or, whatever difficulties any one may have to conflict with in the discharge of his duty, if he abide in faith, he shall in the end obtain the things promised.

2. Faith, that hath thus "stopped the mouths of lions," can restrain, disappoint, and stop the rage of the most savage oppressors and persecutors of the church.

3. We ought to exercise faith about temporal mercies, as they are oftentimes received by it, and given on account of it.

VERSES 35—37.

*—And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.*

§1. Instances of another nature. The power of faith under various sufferings. 2. Some were tortured to death. §3. Yet accepted not deliverance. §4. The ground of their steadfastness. §5. Others had trials of mockings, scourgings, bonds, imprisonments. §6. Stoned. §7. Some were sawn asunder. §8. Tempted. §9. Slain. §10. Some wandered about, §11. Meanly clothed, §12. and destitute of friends. §13. Observations.

§1. **H**E proceeds in the next place to instances quite of another nature, and which were more immediately suited to the condition of the Hebrews: for hearing of these great and glorious things, they might be apt to think that they were not so immediately concerned in them. For their condition was poor, persecuted, exposed to all evils, and death itself, for the profession of the gospel. Their interest therefore was to inquire what help from faith they might expect in that condition? What will faith do, where men are to be oppressed,

persecuted, and slain? To this he replies, that its power was great in preserving the souls of believers under the greatest *sufferings*. There is as much glory to a spiritual eye in the *catalogue* of the effects of faith which follow, as in that which went before. The church is no less beautiful and glorious when encompassed and seemingly overwhelmed with all the evils and dreadful miseries here recounted, than when it is in the greatest peace and prosperity. To look indeed only on the outside of them, gives a terrible prospect; but to see faith and love to God working effectually under them all; to see comforts retained, yea, consolations abound, holiness promoted, God glorified, the world condemned, the souls of men profited, and at length triumphant over all; this is beautiful and glorious. To *do* the greatest things, and to *suffer* the hardest, is all one to faith. It is equally ready for both as God shall call, and equally effectual. These things, as to the *flesh*, differ nearly as heaven and hell, they are both alike to faith when duty calls. The apostle takes most of these instances, if not all, from the time of the persecution of the church under Antiochus, the king of Syria, in the days of the Maccabees.

§2. "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." (Εἰς τυμπανισθησαν) *they were tortured*; critics have remarked, that (τυμπανον) *tympanum*, whence the word is formed, signifies either an *engine* whereon those who were tortured were stretched out, as a skin is stretched on the head of a drum; or the *instruments* used in beating them. So some render the word, *fustibus multati, contusi, caesi*; but the word is frequently used to take away the lives of men by any kind of *torture* or tormenting pain, therefore the precise notation of it from the original is not here so much to be regarded:

we have, therefore, rendered it properly, "*were tortured*;" that is, to death. There is no doubt but the apostle hath respect herein to the story recorded in the sixth and seventh chapters of the second book of Maccabees. For the words are a summary of the things there ascribed to Eleazer, who was beaten to death when he had been persuaded and allured to accept deliverance by transgressing the law. And the like respect may be had to the mother and her seven sons, whose torments are there also recorded. There never was any greater instance of the degeneracy of human nature to the image and likeness of the devil than this, that so many men have been found, even in high places of power—emperors, kings, judges, and priests—who were not satisfied to take away the lives of the true worshippers of God by the sword, or such other ways as they slew the worst of malefactors, but invented all kinds of hellish *tortures* whereby to destroy them. But this also hath God seen good to permit, in that patience whereby he endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath that are thus fitted for destruction. "*They were tortured*;" that is, the utmost that the devil and the world can reach unto, all the hell he hath to threaten his enemies with. But when he hath done his utmost, it falls only on the *body*, it cannot reach the soul; it is but of a short continuance, and gives assurance of entering into a blessed eternity. It can shut out no divine consolation from the minds of them that suffer; a little precious faith will carry believers victoriously through the worst of all.

§3. The *way* whereby those who were tortured evidenced their faith, was, that they "accepted not deliverance;" that is, freedom from their *tortures*, which was offered them in case they would forego their profession. This is expressly affirmed of Eleazer, and



the seven brethren. Yea, they were not only offered to be freed from tortures and death, but to have great rewards and promotions, which they magnanimously refused. And it was not thus with them only, but also with all that have been tortured for religion. For the *principal* design of the devil, in bringing them unto tortures, is—not to slay their *bodies* thereby, though that he aims at in the next place, in case his first design fails, but—to destroy their *souls*. Unto Eleazer it was offered, that he should bring flesh of his own providing to the place where he was to eat, and only make an appearance that he had eaten swine's flesh, which he resolutely and gloriously refused. It may be, this would by some be esteemed a small matter, and such as, for the refusal whereof, wise men ought not to have undergone martyrdom by tortures. But the things which are commanded or forbidden of God, are not to be esteemed by the *matter* of them, or what they are in themselves, but by the *authority* of him that commands or forbids them. The authority of God may be despised in small things as well as in great; and therefore God doth ordinarily choose out arbitrary institutions for the trial of the church's faith. So the martyrs have in England died on account of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. And if we begin at any time to suppose that, to save our lives, we may comply with some *lesser* things (as it were bowing in the house of Rimmon) forbidden by Jehovah, both faith and profession are lost. We know not what command, what ordinance, what institution, what prohibition, God will single out to be the means and subject of our trial as to sufferings. If we are not *equally ready* to suffer for *every* one, we shall suffer for none at all, see Jam. ii, 10.

§4. The ground of their steadfastness in their pro-

fession, and under their tortures, was, "that they might obtain a better resurrection." So one of the brethren in Maccabees affirmed expressly, that he "endured those torments, and death itself, in that he believed God would raise him up at the last day." This, as the *Syriac* has it, they were "*intent upon*." And this the apostle calls a "*better resurrection*," not only in opposition to the *deliverance* they refused, but because he intends that "*better resurrection*," which is *to life*; for seeing all shall rise again, only some shall to life, but some to everlasting torments.

§5. "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments." It is of no use to fix the particulars mentioned to certain determinate persons, as Jeremiah, or others: for seeing the apostle hath left that undetermined, so may we. Certain it is, that there were in those days believers who, through faith, patiently and victoriously underwent these things. Of which it is said, (*πειραν ελαβον*) *they had trial*; (*experti sunt*) *they had experience* of them, they really underwent them, and consequently their faith was *tried* with them. (*Εμπαιγμων*) of *cruel mockings*; such as were cast on our Lord Jesus Christ himself; see Matt. xx, 19; xxvii, 29, *ludibrium*, a *mocking with reproach* and contumely, or scorn. Hence we have rendered it "*cruel mockings*." The world is never more witty, nor doth more please itself, than when it can invent reproachful names and pretended crimes to cast upon suffering believers. Whereas the word is derived from (*παιζω*, and that from *παις*) to *play* and *mock childishly*, it may respect the calumnious reproaches that oftentimes in the streets are cast on suffering professors by the rude foolish multitude, like the children that ran after Elisha mocking and scoffing at him. And this is reckoned among "*severe*

sufferings," there being nothing more harsh to ingenuous minds, nor any thing almost which they had not as willingly undergo; nor is there any thing that their adversaries inflict on them with more pleasure and exaltation of mind. *Mockings* are persecutor's *triumphs*; but these also faith will conquer. To these (*μαστίγων*) *stripes* are added, a servile punishment used towards vagabonds and the vilest of men. Of the two last ways of trial, viz. "*bonds and imprisonment*," we have had so full an *exposition* in the days wherein we live, that they need no farther explication.

§6. "They were stoned." This kind of death was peculiar to the Jews; and, therefore, may not be misapplied to Naboth; 1 Kings xxxi, 13, and Zechariah, 2 Chron. xxiv, 21. This punishment was appointed by law for blasphemers, idolaters, false prophets, and the like profaners of true religion only. But when the persecuting world grew to the height of impiety, it was applied to those that were the true professors of it. So the blood of the first christian martyr was shed under the pretence of that law, Acts vii, and, indeed, the devil is "never more a devil," than when he gets a pretence of God's weapons into his hands.

§7. "They were *sawn asunder*;" some were so, although their names and the particular facts are not recorded. A savage kind of torture, evidencing the malice of the devil, with the brutish rage and madness of persecutors.

§8. "They were tempted;" the expression may denote—either a *distinct kind* of suffering, by which we may gather how great a trial there is in temptations in a suffering season, and what vigor of faith is required to conflict with them; or, the *temptations* wherewith they were urged by their persecutors under their sufferings, and the threatenings of death to

them. It is an especial promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, that when persecution cometh, he will "keep his own from the hour and power of temptation, Rev. iii, 10.

§9. "They were slain with the sword," or died by the slaughter of the sword; the sword either of injustice and oppression in form of law, or of violence and force, 1 Kings xix, 10. Many have been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, Rev. xx, 4.

Thus we see that all sorts of death have been consecrated to the glory of God in the sufferings of the church. Christ himself, the Amen and faithful witness, was crucified; John the Baptist, his forerunner, was beheaded; Stephen, his first martyr, was stoned.

§10. "They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins." (Περιελθόν) *they wandered about*; went from place to place without any fixed residence or quiet habitation; they were driven from their own houses by law or violence, sometimes flying from one city to another, sometimes forced to forsake them all, and betake themselves to the wilderness. The best interpretation of this word and place is given us by the apostle in the instance of himself, (1 Cor. iv, 11, περιελαβόμεν) *we wander*, we have no abiding place, but move up and down, as men altogether uncertain where to fix.

§11. But it may be said, that although they did thus go up and down, yet they *travelled in good equipage*; no, they thus wandered "*in sheep-skins and goat-skins*." Their outward condition was poor, mean, and contemptible; their clothing was the *unwrought skins* of sheep and goats; nothing here is intimated of *choice*, as a testimony of mortification, but *necessity*; they were poor men that wandered up and down in poor clothing. So have the saints of God in

sundry seasons been reduced to the utmost extremities of poverty and want. And there is a satisfaction in faith and obedience, there are such internal consolations in that state, as outbalance all the outward evils that may be undergone for the profession of them; there is a future state, there are eternal rewards and punishments, which will set all things right, to the glory of divine justice, and the everlasting honor of the sufferers.

§12. "Destitute, afflicted, tormented." (Τοις ἐρημέτοις) *destitute*; Syriac and Vulgate (*egentes*, or *indigentes*, *pauperes*) *poor, needy, wanting*. All good Latin interpreters render it by (*destituti*) *destitute*, which word is by use more significant in our language than any to the same purpose, for which cause we have borrowed it from the Latin; what I judge is most particularly intended in this word, is "*want of friends, and all means of relief from them*;" and this, as some knew, is a severe ingredient in suffering.

In this condition they were (ὀλιβομένοις) *afflicted*. The former word declares what was *absent*, what they had not, as to outward supplies and comforts, this declares what was *present* with them, they were straitened, or afflicted. Here the word seems to have a peculiar respect to the great straits they were brought into by the dangers that continually pressed on them; this state was very *afflictive*; that is, grievous, pressing, and troublesome to their minds; for when we are called to suffer for the gospel, it is the will of God that we should be sensible of, and affected with the evils we undergo, that the power of faith may be evident in the conquest of them.

It is added, that they were (κακῶς χεμένοις) *tormented*; properly (*male habiti*, or *male vexati*) *not well treated*, which is the signification of the word, and

not "tormented," as we have rendered it. In this wandering condition they met with very ill treatment; all sorts of persons took occasion to vex and press them with various evils.

§13. We may from the whole *observe*;

1. Sufferings will stir us up to the exercise of faith, on the most difficult objects of it, and bring in the comforts of them into our souls. Faith of the resurrection hath been always most eminent in prisons and under tortures.

2. There may be sufferings sufficient for the trial of the faith of the church, when the world is restrained from blood and death.

3. No instrument of cruelty, no inventions of the devil or the world, no terrible preparations of death; that is, no endeavors of the "gates of hell," shall ever prevail against the faith of God's elect.

4. It is no small degree of suffering, for men by law or violence to be driven from those places of their own habitation, which the providence of God, and all just right among men, have allotted to them.

#### VERSE 38.

*Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*

§1. Connexion. §2. The world was not worthy of them. §3. Their wandering state of life farther described. §4. Observations.

§1. **MEN** in this course of life might be looked on as the "off-scourings of all things," and unmeet either for human converse, or any of the good things of this world; but rather to be esteemed as the beasts of the field; these thoughts the apostle obviates.

There are two things in these words;—the *character* which the apostle gives to these sufferers; "the world

was not worthy of them;" and—the *remainder* of their sufferings which he would represent; "They wandered in deserts," &c.

§2. Their character is, that (*ο κόσμος*) *the world* was not worthy of them; by the "world" is understood the inhabitants of it, in their interests, designs, ends, and actions; their successes in them, and advantages by them, as they are opposite to the true interest of the church and people of God. In this sense the *world* in its power, pride, pomp, enjoyments, and the like, hath an high opinion of itself, as possessed of all that is desirable, despising and hating them who are not in conjunction with it in these things.

And yet of this world it is said, that (*οὐκ ἔστιν ἄξιος*) *of these sufferers it was not worthy*. The world thinks them not *worthy of it*; to live in it, or at least to enjoy any name or place among the men of it; but they may esteem of it as they please; we know that this testimony is true, and the world one day shall confess it to be so. The design of the apostle is to obviate an objection, that these persons were *justly* cast out as not worthy of the society of mankind, which he doth by a contrary assertion, that the world was not *worthy of them*; it was not worthy to have *converse* with them; it is not worthy of those *mercies* and blessings, which accompany this sort of persons, where they have a quiet habitation.

§3. Having given this *character* of these poor sufferers, he proceeds to issue his account of their sufferings in a farther description of that *wandering course of life* which he had before ascribed to them; (*πλανώμενοι*) *they wandered*, with an erratical motion, without any certain aim as to any place of rest; they were *before* driven from cities, boroughs, towns corporate, and villages, partly by law, partly by force. What now re-

mains for them but deserts, solitary, and uninhabited places? By "*desarts* and uninhabited mountains," all know what is intended; nor is there any need of any exact distinction between "*dens* and *caves*," though possibly one may signify *greater*, the other *lesser* subterraneous receptacles; but the common use of the first word seems to denote such *hollow places* under ground as wild beasts have sheltered themselves in from the pursuit of men.

This was the state of these servants of the living God; when they were driven from all inhabited places, they found no rest in deserts and mountains, but wandered up and down, taking up dens and caves for their shelter. And instances of the same kind have been multiplied in the pagan and antichristian persecutions of the churches of the New Testament; but that no color is hence given to an *hermetical* life by voluntary choice, much less to the horrible abuse of it under the papacy, is openly evident.

§4. Hence *observe*;

1. Let the world think as well, as highly, as proudly of itself as it pleaseth, it is, when it persecutes, base and unworthy of the society of true believers, and of the mercies wherewith it is accomplished.

2. God's esteem of his people is never the less for their outward sufferings and calamities, whatever the world judgeth of them.

3. Oftentimes it is better, and more safe for the saints of God, to be in the wilderness among the beasts of the field, than in a savage world, inflamed by the devil into rage and persecution.

4. Though the world may prevail to drive the church into the wilderness, to the ruin of all public profession in their own apprehension, yet it shall be there pre-



served to the appointed season of its deliverance; the world shall never have the victory over it.

5. It becomes us to be filled with thoughts of and affections to spiritual things, to labor for an anticipation of glory, that we faint not in the consideration of the evils that may befall us on account of the gospel.

#### VERSES 39, 40.

*And all these having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

§1. The apostle's concluding remark, and the subject stated. §2. (I.) Of whom he speaks. §3. (II.) What is affirmed of them. §4. (III.) What is denied concerning them. §5—7. (IV.) The reason of it. §8, 9. Observations.

§1. **I**N this close of the apostle's discourse, which is an observation concerning all the instances of the faith of believers under the Old Testament, and his judgment concerning their state, four things are considerable;

1. Who they are of whom he speaks; "*All these.*"

2. What he allows and ascribes to them; "They obtained a good report through faith."

3. What he yet denies to them; "They received not the promise."

4. The reason of it; "God having provided," &c.

§2. (I.) Those of whom he speaks in this close of his discourse, that they "obtained a good report through faith," are the same of whom he affirms in the beginning of it, ver. 2; for, of any distinction to be made between them, as some would insinuate, there is not the least intimation. It is said expressly of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they "received not the promises," ver. 13; as well as of those now mentioned. It is one thing to obtain (*επαγγελίας*) promises, indefinitely, promises of any sort, as some are said to do, ver. 33;

and another to receive (*την επαγγελίαν*) *that signal promise* which was made to the fathers. Nothing can be more alien from the design of the apostle, than to apply the promise intended to *temporal* deliverance, and freedom from suffering. Wherefore the "all these" intended, are all those who have been reckoned up from the giving out of the first promise concerning the Savior and Redeemer of the church, with the destruction of the works of the devil.

§3. (II.) Of all these it is affirmed, that they (*μαρτυρηθέντες δια πίστεως*) *obtained a good report through faith*; they were well testified unto; they were God's martyrs, and he in a sense was theirs, giving *witness* to their faith; (see the Exposition of ver. 2.) That they were all of them so testified unto on account of their faith, we need no other testimony but this of the apostle; yet is there no doubt but that in the several ages of the church wherein they lived, they were renowned for their faith and the fruits of it in what they did or suffered.

§4. (III.) What he denies concerning them, is, that they "received not the promise." It is affirmed of Abraham that he "received the promise," ver. 17; which promise is declared by the apostle to be the great fundamental promise of the gospel, chap. vi, 13—18. The same which is the object of the faith of the church in all ages; wherefore the promise *formally* considered must in the one place be intended; and in the other it is considered *materially* as to the thing itself promised. The promise, as a faithful *engagement* of future good; they received; but the good thing *itself* was not in their days exhibited; besides, whatever this promise be, the apostle is positive that *they* did not receive it, but that the *Christians* in those days had received it. It is therefore not only untrue, and unsafe, but contrary to

the fundamental principles of our religion, the faith of Christians in all ages, and the design of the apostle in this whole epistle, to interpret this promise, as some do, of any thing but the coming of Christ in the flesh, of his accomplishment of the work of our redemption, with the unspeakable privileges and advantages that the church hath received thereby. That this promise was made to the elders from the beginning of the world; that it was not actually accomplished to them, which was necessarily confined to one season, called "the fulness of time;" and that herein lies the great difference of the two states of the church, that under the Old Testament, and that under the New, with the prerogative of the latter above the former, are such weighty sacred truths, that without an acknowledgment of them no important doctrine either of the Old Testament or the New can be rightly understood. This then was the state of believers under the Old Testament; they had the promise of the exhibition of Christ the Son of God in the flesh for the redemption of the church; this promise they *received*, *saw afar off* as to its actual accomplishment, were *persuaded* of the truth of it, and *embraced* it, ver. 13; the actual accomplishment of it they desired, longed for, and looked after, Luke x, 24; inquiring diligently into the grace of God contained therein, 1 Pet. i, 11—13; hereby they enjoyed the benefits of it even as we, Acts xv, 11; yet they received it not as to its actual accomplishment, in the coming of Christ; and the reason hereof the apostle gives in the next verse.

§5. (IV.) "God having provided," &c. Having declared the victorious faith of believers under the Old Testament, with what it enabled them to do and suffer, and given an account of their state, as to the actual accomplishment of that promise which they lived on,

and trusted to, the apostle now *compares* that state of theirs with that of believers under the gospel, giving the pre-eminence to the latter, with the reason of it.

In the exposition of these words, Schlictingius proceeds on these principles; that the promise intended ver. 39, is the promise of eternal life; that under the Old Testament, believers had no such promise, whatever hopes or conjectures they might have of it; that both they and we at death, cease to be in soul and body until the resurrection, none entering before into eternal life. But, if so, if when any one dies, he is nothing or as nothing; if it is but *one moment* between death and the resurrection, as he contends, the state of the one is in nothing better than the other, although they should die thousands of years one before another. But as all these things are openly false, and contrary to the chief principles of the Christian religion, so they are utterly remote from the mind of the apostle, as we shall see in the exposition of the words.

Those of the church of *Rome* do hereby fancy a *limbus*, a subterraneous receptacle of souls, wherein, they say, the spirits of believers under the Old Testament were detained until after the resurrection of Christ, so that "they without us were not made perfect." But the apostle treats not here at all about the difference between one sort of men and another after death; but of that which was between them who lived under the Old Testament church state, *whilst they lived*, and those that live under and enjoy the privileges of the New, as is evident in the very reading of the epistle.

§6. "God having (προβλεψαμεν) *provided*; the word properly signifies *foreseeing*; but God's *prævision* is his *provision*, as being always accompanied with his preordination; his foresight with his decree. For known unto him are all his works from the foundation of the

world, Acts xv, 18. Now this provision of God is the (*οικονομία των καιρῶν*) *dispensation of the times*, Ephes. i, 10; the ordering of the state, times, and seasons of the church, and the revelation of himself to it. "*Something better;*" that is, more excellent, a state above theirs, or all that is granted them. I suppose it ought to be out of question with all Christians, that it is the *actual exhibition* of the Son of God in the flesh, the coming of the promised seed, with his accomplishment of the work of redemption, and all the privileges of the church, in light, grace, liberty, spiritual worship, with boldness of access to God that ensued thereon, which is intended. For, were not these the things which they "received not" under the Old Testament? Were not these the things which were "promised" from the beginning, which were expected, longed for, and desired by all believers of old, who yet saw them only afar off, though through faith they were saved by virtue of them? And are not these the things whereby the church state of the gospel was *perfected*; the things alone wherein our state is *better* than theirs? For, as to outward appearances of things, they had more glory, costly ceremonies and splendor in their worship, than is appointed in the Christian church; and their worldly prosperity was for a long season very great, much exceeding any thing that the Christian church did then enjoy. To deny, therefore, these to be the *better things* that God provided for us, is to overthrow the faith of the Old Testament and the New.

§7. "That they without us were not made perfect." *Without us*, is as much as without the things which are actually exhibited to us, the things provided for us, and our participation of them. They and we, though distributed by divine provision into distinct states, yet, with respect to the first promise, and the renovation of it to Abraham, are but *one church*, built on the same

foundation, and enlivened by the same spirit of grace. Wherefore, until we came into the church state, *they* could not be *made perfect*, seeing the church state itself was not so. All the *advantages* of grace and mercy which they received and enjoyed, were by virtue of those *better things*, which are actually exhibited to us; these they applied by faith, and enjoyed nothing by virtue of any thing committed to themselves. Wherefore,

That which the apostle affirms, is, that they never attained that perfect *consummate* spiritual state which God had designed and prepared for his church in the fulness of times, and which they foresaw should be granted to others and not to themselves, 1 Pet. i, 11—13. See chap. vii.

I cannot but marvel that so many have stumbled, as most have done, in the exposition of these words, and involved themselves in difficulties of their own devising; for they are a plain *epitome* of the whole doctrinal part of the epistle, so as that no intelligent judicious person can avoid the sense which they tender, unless they divert their minds from the whole scope and design of the apostle.

§8. And here we *observe*:

1. It is our duty also, not only to believe that we may be justified before God, but so to evidence our faith by the fruits of it, as that we may obtain a good report, or be justified before men.

2. The disposal of the states and times of the church, as to the communication of light, grace, and privileges, depends merely on the sovereign pleasure and will of God, and not on any merit or preparation in man. The coming of Christ was as little deserved by the men of that age, as by those of any age from the foundation of the world.

3. Though God gives more light and grace to the church in one season than another, yet in every season he gives what is sufficient to guide believers in their faith and obedience to eternal life.

6. It is the duty of believers, in every state of the church, to improve the spiritual provision that God hath made for them; always remembering, that to whom much is given, much is required.

§9. And to close this chapter we may observe:

1. God measures out to all his people their portion in service, sufferings, privileges, and rewards, according to his own good pleasure. And therefore the apostle shuts up this discourse of the faith, obedience, sufferings, and successes of the saints under the Old Testament, with a declaration that God had yet provided more excellent things for his church, than any they were made partakers of. All he doth in this way, is of mere grace and bounty, and therefore he may distribute these things as he pleaseth.

2. It is Christ alone who was to give, and could give perfection or consummation to the church; he was in all things to have the pre-eminence.

3. All the outward glorious worship of the Old Testament had *no perfection* in it; and so *no glory* compared to that which is brought in by the gospel, 2 Cor. iii, 10.

4. All perfection, all consummation is in Christ alone; for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily; and we are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power.

## CHAPTER XII.

### VERSE 1.

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

§1. The design of the chapter, and the several parts of it. §2. (I.) Their exposition. Witnesses, what here intended. §3. A cloud of them, what. §4. The weight to be laid aside, what. §5. How to be laid aside. §6—8. The sin that easily besets us, what. §9. How it may be laid aside. §10. The duty itself of running the Christian race. §11. Which is set before us. §12. It requires strength and speed. §13. Patience, §14, 15. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HIS chapter contains an *application* of the doctrine declared and confirmed in the foregoing chapter. *Doctrine and use* was the apostle's method. There are three general parts of the chapter:

1. A pressing of the *exhortation* in hand from new additional motives, ver. 1—11.

2. A direction to *special duties*, necessary to a due compliance with the general exhortation, ver. 12—17.

3. A new cogent *argument* to the same purpose, taken from a comparison between the two states of the law and gospel to the end of the chapter.

His whole discourse is exceedingly pregnant with arguments to the purpose in hand. For it both declares what hath been the lot of true believers in all ages from the beginning, which none ought now to be surprised with; what was the way of their deportment so as to please God; and what was the success or victory which they obtained in the end.

Concerning the passage in hand we may observe, that the whole of it is *figurative*, consisting in sundry metaphors drawn from the *comparison* of our patient abiding in the profession of the gospel, and our contending for a prize. The exposition of the



words is not so much to be taken from the precise signification of them, as from the *matter* plainly intended in them.

§2. (I.) I shall open the words in the order wherein they lie in the text. The first thing is, the motive and encouragement given to our diligence in the duty exhorted to. "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses;" we having so great a cloud of witnesses placed about us; we, *we also*, or *even we*. The apostle joins himself with these Hebrews, not only the better to insinuate the exhortation into their minds, by engaging himself with them, but also to intimate that the greatest and strongest believers stand in need of this encouragement. Witnesses are of two sorts:

1. Such as *behold the doing* of any thing, and give their testimony to it when it is done. For in the striving and contest in these public games which are alluded to, there were multitudes, clouds of spectators, that *looked on* to encourage those that contended by their applauses, and to testify of their success.

So is it with us in our patient perseverance; all the saints of the Old Testament do, as it were, stand looking on us in our striving, encouraging us to our duty, and ready to testify to our success with their applauses. They are all *placed about us* to this end; and thus we are *encompassed* with them. And they are so in the *scripture*, wherein they being dead, yet see, and speak, and bear testimony. The scripture hath *encompassed us* with them, so that when we are in our trials, whatever way we look in it, we may behold the faces of some or other of these worthies looking on, and encouraging us.

2. But the intention of the apostle may be better taken from his general scope, which requireth that

the witnesses be such as testify to *what is to be done*, and the grounds of truth whereon it ought to be done. For he intends, especially the persons whom he had before enumerated; and that which they testify to is this, that faith will carry believers safely through all that they may be called to do or suffer in the profession of the gospel. They all jointly *testify* to these things, that it is best for us to believe and obey God, whatever may befall us in our so doing. Faith, where it is true and sincere, will engage those in whom it is, to venture on the greatest hazards, dangers, and miseries in the world, rather than to forego their profession, and it will safely carry us through them all. Those who testify these things are important witnesses in this cause. Testifying to the folly of our fears, the falseness of all the suggestions of unbelief, and the fraud of Satan's temptations; as also to the excellency of the duties whereto we are called, and the certainty of our success in them through believing.

And in this sense do I take the *witnesses* here intended, both because of the scope of the place, and that we know by experience of what kind of use this testimony is. But if any think better of the former sense, I shall not oppose it. For in the whole verse the apostle doth, as it were, represent believers in their profession, as *striving for victory*, as upon a theatre. Christ sits at the head of it, as the great *Agonothetes*, the judge and rewarder of those that strive lawfully, and acquit themselves by perseverance to the end. All the saints departed divinely testified unto, stand on every side, looking on, and encouraging us in our course; which was wont to be a mighty provocation to men, to put forth the utmost of their strength in the public contests for victory. Both these senses are consistent.

§3. Of these witnesses, there is said to be a *cloud*, "*so great a cloud*." A cloud in Hebrew is (*dy*) a *thick*, perplexed, or condensed thing. God compares the sins of his people to a cloud, and a thick cloud, because of their multitude, the vapor of them being condensed like a cloud, Isa. xlv, 22. And in all authors, a thick body of men or soldiers compacted together, is usually called a cloud of them. So Homer, Iliad iv, (*Ἀλλὰ δὲ νεφὸς σιπέλοπέζων*) *with him followed a cloud of footmen*. So Livy, (*Peditum equitumque nubes*;) *a cloud of horse and foot*. Wherefore, "*so great a cloud*," is, *so great a number*, or multitude at once appearing together to witness in this cause. What is done in the scripture for our use, is immediately done to us; and what is *spoken* in it, is spoken to us, see ver. 5.

§4 "Let us lay aside every weight." Those who were to run in a race, freed themselves from all weight or burden; and such things as might entangle them, as long garments, which, cleaving to them, should be their continual hinderance. "*Laying aside*," or as others render the word (*ἀποθεμενοι*) *casting away*. The word is once used in the New Testament with respect to a *natural* action; Acts vii, 58, "The witnesses (*ἀρ-εθοντο*) *laid down*—that is, *put off* and laid down—their clothes;" which gives light into the *metaphor*. In all other places it is used with respect to *vicious habits*, or causes of sin, which we are to part with, or cast away as hinderances, see Ephes. iv, 22—25, Col. iii, 8; James i, 21; 1Pet. ii, 1. Let no man be confident in himself; he hath nothing of his own but will *obstruct* him in the way of holy ordinances. Unless these things are deposed, we cannot run the race with success.

That which we are first to lay aside, is (*οὐκ ἔστιν*) "*every weight*." The expression will scarce allow,

that this should be confined to any one thing, or to things of one kind. No more seems to be intended, but that we part with *every thing*, of what kind soever it be, which would hinder us in our race. And so it is of the same import with the great command of *self-denial*, which our Savior gives in so strict charge to all who take on them the profession of the gospel, as that without which they would not persevere therein, Matt. xvi, 33, 34.

But because there is another great gospel-rule in the same case, which restrains this self denial to one sort of things, which the words seem to point to, and which also falls in with constant experience, it may have here an especial regard. And this rule we may learn from the words of our Savior also; Matt. xix, 23, 24, "Jesus said to his disciples, verily I say unto you, that a *rich man* shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and again, "I say unto you, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Nothing but the exceeding greatness of the power of God, and his grace, can carry a rich man safely, in a time of suffering, to heaven and glory. And it is confirmed by the apostle, 1 Tim. vi, 9, 10, "They will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," &c. The riches of this world, and the love of them, are a peculiar obstruction to constancy in the profession of the gospel, on many accounts. These, therefore, seem to be a burden hindering us in our race in an especial manner.

And these things may be called "*a weight*," not from their own nature, for they are as light as vanity; but from the consequence of our setting our hearts and affections upon them. A man may burden himself

with feathers or chaff, as well as with things in themselves more ponderous.

§5. How is this *weight* to be laid aside? Suppose the weight to be the good things of this life, with the engagement of our affections to them; then this laying them aside includes,

1. A willingness, a readiness, a resolution, if called thereto, to part with them cheerfully for the sake of Christ and the gospel; so was it with them who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. When this resolution is prevalent in the mind, the soul will be much eased of the weight of those things, which would hinder it in its race. But whilst our hearts cleave to them with an undue valuation, whilst we cannot attain to a cheerful willingness to have them taken from us, or to be taken ourselves from them, for the sake of the gospel, they will be an intolerable burden to us in our course. For hence will the mind dispute every dangerous duty; hearken to every sinful contrivance for safety; be surprised out of its own power by every appearing danger; and to be discomposed in its frame on all occasions. Such a burden can no man carry in a race.

2. Sedulous and daily mortification of our hearts and affections with respect to all things of this nature, is principally prescribed to us in this command of "laying them aside as *a weight*;" this will take out of them whatever is really burdensome to us. *Mortification* is the dissolution of the conjunction, or league, that is between our affections and earthly things, which alone gives them their weight and cumbrance, see Col. iii, 1—5. Where this grace and duty are in their due exercise, these things cannot influence the mind into any disorder, nor make it unready for its race, or unwieldy in it.

8. Continual observation of what difficulties and hinderances these things are apt to cast on our minds, either in our general course, or with respect to particular duties: they operate in our minds by love, fear, care, delight, contrivances; with a multitude of perplexing thoughts about them. Unless we continually watch against all these ways to obviate their insinuations, we shall find them a weight and burden in all parts of our race. In short; faith, prayer, mortification, an high valuation of things invisible and eternal; a continual preference of them to all things present and seen, are enjoined in this expression—"laying aside every weight."

§6. The other thing to be laid aside is, (*την ἀμαρτίαν συνεπίσταντον*) "*the sin that doth so easily beset us.*" We may be satisfied, that no bare consideration of the word, either as simple, or in its composition, or its use in other authors, will of itself give us the full and proper signification of it in this place; which is evident to me from hence, in that those who have made the most diligent inquiry into it, and traced it through all forms, are most remote from agreeing what is, or should be the precise signification of it; but close their disquisitions with various and opposite conjectures.

I shall therefore attend to other scripture directions and rules in the same case, with the experience of believers, who are exercised in it, and the use of those other words with which the doubtful expression is joined.

§7. The word (*ἀπολιθῆμι*) *to lay aside*, is never used in scripture with respect to that which is evil and sinful, but with regard to the *original depravation* of nature; and the *vicious habits* wherein it consists, with the effects of them. And why it should have another intention here, seeing that it is not only suit-

ed to the analogy of faith, but most agreeable to the design of the apostle, I know not. And the truth is, the want of a due consideration of this one word, with its use, which expositors have universally overlooked, hath occasioned many fruitless conjectures on the place.

The general nature of the evil to be laid aside, is expressed by the article prefixed (*τηναναμειβιν*) *that sin*. Now this, if there be nothing to limit it, is to be taken in its largest, most usual, and most eminent signification. And that this is the original depravation of our natures, cannot be denied. So it is in an especial manner stated, Rom. vii, where it is constantly called by that name. And verse 17, "the sin that *dwelleth in me*," is of the same force and signification with "the sin that doth *so easily beset us*;" though all the allusions are various. See Rom. vii, 20, 23.

But I do not judge that *original sin* is here absolutely intended; but only with respect to an especial way of exerting its efficacy, and to a certain end; namely, as it works by *unbelief* to obstruct us, and turn us away from the profession of the gospel. And so the instruction falls in with the rule given us in the same case in other places of the epistle, as chap. iii, 12, &c. The sin, therefore, intended is *in-dwelling sin* which, with respect to the profession of the gospel, and permanency therein with patience, worketh by *unbelief*, whereby it exposeth us to all sorts of temptations, gives advantage to all weakening, discouraging considerations, still aiming to make us faint, and at length to depart from the living God.

These things being fixed, it is all one whether we interpret (*ευπεισις*) "that which doth *easily beset us*," it being in a readiness always to do so; or, "that which doth *easily expose us to evil*;" which are the two

senses of the word, with any probability, contended for. Both come to the same.

§8: The sin is that which hath an *easy access* to our minds to hinder us in our race, or doth *easily expose* us to danger, by the advantage it hath to these ends; for, it is *always present* with us, and so is never wanting to any favorable occasion. It stands in need of no help from outward advantages to attempt our minds; dwelling in us, abiding with us, cleaving to us, it is always ready to clog, to hinder and disturb us. Doth any difficulty or danger appear in the way? it is *at hand* to cry, "Spare thyself," working by fear. Is any sinful compliance proposed to us? it is ready to argue for its embracement, working by carnal wisdom. Doth the weariness of the flesh decline perseverance in necessary duties? it wants not arguments to promote its inclinations, working by the dispositions of remaining enmity and vanity. Doth the whole matter and cause of our profession come into question, as in a time of severe persecution? it is ready to set all its engines on work for our ruin; fear of danger, love of things present, hopes of recovery, reserves for a better season, the examples of others esteemed good and wise, shall all be put into the hands of unbelief, to be managed against faith, patience, constancy, and perseverance, and it hath a remaining interest in all the faculties of our souls.

§9. The last inquiry is, how we may *lay it aside*, or put it from us? One learned man thinks it a sufficient reason to prove, that the sin of nature is not here intended, because we cannot lay *that* aside, whilst we are in this life. But I have shewed that the word (*αποθηναι*) is never used when a duty is enjoined by it, but it is with respect to *this sin*. Wherefore,

1. We are to lay it aside *absolutely and universal-*



ly, as to *design and endeavor*. We cannot in this life attain to perfection in holiness, yet this is what we are to endeavor all the days of our lives; 2 Cor. vii, 1, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

2. We ought *actually* to lay it aside in such a measure and degree, as that it may not be a *prevalent* hinderance to us, in any of the duties of Christian obedience; for it may have various *degrees* of power and efficacy according as it is neglected or continually mortified; and it oftentimes takes advantage by a conjunction with outward temptations to our unspeakable prejudice. And if the mortification of it be neglected in any one branch, or any of its exertions, if any one sin be indulged, it will ruin all strength and resolution for sufferings on account of the gospel.

The way whereby it principally manifests itself, is, by the clogs and hinderances, which it puts upon us in the constant course of our obedience. Hence many think, that—whereas it is said "easily to beset us" to our hinderance—an allusion is taken from a long garment, which if a man wear in the running of a race, it will hinder and entangle him, and sometimes cast him to the ground; so that, unless he cast it away, he can have no success in his race.

§10. The last thing expressed, is the *duty itself* directed and exhorted to; "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." What is the duty in general intended hath been sufficiently declared; but whereas the terms wherein it is expressed, all but that word "*with patience*," are metaphorical, they must be opened.

That with respect whereto we are exhorted, is (*αγωνα, certamen*) a *strife* or *conflict*. It is used for any thing, work, or exercise, about which there is a

striving or contending to the utmost of men's abilities. Such as were used when men contended for mastery and victory in the Olympic games; and so it is applied to all earnest spiritual endeavors in any kind, Phil. i, 30; Col. ii, 1; 1 Thes. ii, 2; 1 Tim. vi, 12; 2 Tim. iv, 7. Here the sense of the word is restrained to the particular instance of a *race*, because we are enjoined to *run* it. But it is such a race as is for a *victory*, for our lives and souls, wherein the utmost of our strength and diligence is to be put forth. It is not merely *cursum*, but *certamen*.

1. It is a matter of great difficulty whereto the utmost exercise of our spiritual strength is required; contending with all our might must be in it; without which all expectation of success in a race for mastery is vain and foolish. Hence the apostle prescribes, as a means of it, that we be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," Eph. vi, 10; giving us his own example in a most eminent manner, 1 Cor. ix, 24—27.

2. It is such a race, as wherein there is the judge or (*βραβεύτης*) the *rewarder* of them who overcome, even Christ himself; and there is the reward proposed, which, as the apostle tells us, is an incorruptible crown of glory, and there are encouraging spectators, even all the holy angels above, and the church below.

It being a race, it is of no advantage for any one to begin or make an entrance into it. Every one knows that all is lost in a race where a man doth not hold out to the end.

§11. This race is said to be "set before us." It is not what we fall into by chance, it is not of our own choice or project; and he that sets it before us is Christ himself, who calls us to faith and obedience. He hath determined what shall be the way of obedience, limit-

ing the bounds of it, and ordering the whole course with all the duties belonging to it. It is by him *proposed* to us, it is *set before* us in the gospel; therein he declares its whole nature, and all the circumstances that belong to it. He gives us a full prospect of all the duties required in it, and all the difficulties we shall meet with. He hides nothing from us, especially that of bearing the cross, that our own entrance into it may be an act of our own choice and judgment. Whatever, therefore, we meet with in it, we have no cause of tergiversation or complaint. This is what believers both *reprove* and *refresh* themselves with, when at any time they fall into tribulation for the gospel. Why do I faint? Why do I recoil? Hath he deceived me, who calls me to follow him in obedience? Did he hide any thing from me? Did he not set these tribulations before me, as part of the race that I was to run? So they argue themselves into an holy acquiescency in his wisdom and will. Hence the apostle affirms, that he did not fight *uncertainly*, as men beating the air, because he had an assured path and course set before him. "This is that which Christ hath appointed for me; this is that which at my first call he proposed to me, and set before me," are soul quieting considerations.

§12. Our whole evangelical obedience being compared to a *race*, our performance of it is expressed by "*running*," for which there are two things required—*strength* and *speed*. And the things required to our Christian race are—*strength* in grace, and *diligence* with exercise. The due performance of gospel obedience, especially in the times of trial and temptation, is not a thing of course, is not to be attended in an ordinary manner; spiritual strength put forth in our utmost diligence is required.

Seeing, therefore, that we are called to this exercise we should greatly consider the things which may enable us for it, that we may *so run as to obtain*. But our weakness through our want of improving the principles of spiritual life, and our sloth in the exercise of grace, for the most part, cannot be sufficiently bewailed; and I am sure they are inconsistent with this apostolic exhortation.

§13. "With patience." Patience is either a quiet submissive suffering of evil things, or a quiet waiting for good things future with perseverance and continuance, to the conquest of the one, or the enjoyment of the other. He who suffereth quietly, submissively, with content and satisfaction, what he is called to suffer for the profession of the gospel, doth also quietly wait for the accomplishment of the promises made to them who so suffer, which are great and many. The race is long, and of more than ordinary continuance. We shall be sure to meet with difficulties, oppositions, and temptations in this race; these things will solicit us to desist, and give over our race. With respect to them, all *patience* is prescribed to us; which when it hath its perfect work, will secure us in them all. See on chap. vi, 12—15.

§14. And as to our own instruction we may hence *observe*,

1. We are diligently to consider our own concernment in all scripture examples, and what we are instructed by them. This inference the apostle makes from the collection he had before made to them. "Even we also."

2. God hath not only made provision, but a *plentiful provision* in the scripture for the strengthening of our faith, and our encouragement to duty. "A cloud of witnesses."

3. It is an honor that God puts on his saints departed, especially such as suffered and died for the truth, that even after their death they shall be witnesses to faith and obedience in all generations. They still continue, in a sense, to be *martyrs*, bearing a noble *testimony*.

4. To faint in our profession, whilst we are encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses, is a great aggravation of our sin.

§15. And we may *observe* farther;

1. That the universal mortification of sin is the best preparative, preservative, and security, for a steady profession in a time of trial. Whatever may be our purposes, resolutions, and contrivances, if unmortified sin in any prevalent degree, (as love of the world, fear of men, sensual inclinations to make provision for the flesh) abide in us, we shall never be able to hold out in our race to the end.

2. Whereas the nature of this sin at such seasons is to work by *unbelief* towards a departure from the living God, or the relinquishment of the gospel, we ought to be continually on our watch against it; and no small part of our spiritual wisdom consists in the discovery of its deceitful working, which the apostle gives us severe caution about, chap. iii.

3. The reward proposed to be obtained at the end of this race, is every way worthy of all our pains, diligence, and patience.

#### VERSE 2.

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

1. The design and connexion. §2. Looking to Jesus, *what*, §3. The author and finisher of faith. §4. The joy, *what*; and how set before him. §5. His enduring the cross and despising the shame. §6. The consequent thereof. §7. Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle here riseth to the highest encouragement with respect to the same duty, whereof we are capable. Hitherto he hath proposed to us their example who had professed the same faith with ourselves; now, he proposeth him who is the “author and finisher” of that faith in us all. His *person* is proposed to us as a ground of hope and expectation; whilst he is at the same time an universal *example* of faith and obedience in every kind.

§2. The peculiar prescribed manner of our respect to him, is “*Looking to him;*” and being put in the present tense, a *continual act* is intended. In all that we do in our profession and obedience, we are *constantly* to be looking to Christ. “*Looking,*” in the scripture, when it respects God or Christ, denotes an act of *faith* or *trust*, with hope and expectation. It is not a mere act of the understanding, in consideration of what we look on; but it is an act of the *whole soul* in faith and trust; see Psalm xxxiv, 4—6; Isa. xlv, 22. Wherefore, the Lord Jesus is not proposed to us as a *mere example* to be considered, but as him also in whom we place our faith, trust, and confidence, with all our expectation of success in our Christian course; without this we shall have no benefit by his example. And the word here used (*αφορῶμεν*) so expresseth a *looking to him*, as to include a *looking off from all other things* which might be discouragements to us. Such are the oppositions, persecutions, mockings, evil examples of apostates, &c. Nothing will divert our minds from discouraging views of these things, but faith and trust in Christ. Look not to *these things* in times of suffering, but look to *Christ*.

The name “*Jesus*” minds us of him as a Savior and a sufferer, the former by the signification of it,

Matt. i, 21; the *latter*, in that it was that name alone whereby he was known and called in all his sufferings. Look to him as he was *Jesus*, that is, both the only *Savior* and the greatest *sufferer*.

§3. "The author and finisher of our faith." He by his death and obedience *procured* this grace for us. It is given to us on his account, Phil. i, 29. And he *prays* that we may receive it, John xvii, 19, 20; and he *works* it in us, or bestows it on us by his Spirit, in the beginning and all the increases of it, from first to last. Hence his disciples prayed to him, "Lord *increase* our faith," Luke xvii, 5. So he is the *author* or beginner of our faith, in the *efficacious working* of it in our hearts by his Spirit; and the *finisher* of it in all its *effects*, in liberty, peace, and joy; and all the *fruits* of it in obedience; for "without him we can do nothing." Nor is it faith *objectively* that the apostle treats of, the faith that is *revealed*, but that which is in the hearts of believers. And he is said to be the author and finisher of *the faith* treated of in the foregoing chapter; in them that believed under the Old Testament as well as in themselves.

§4. The next thing in the words is, the ground and reason whereon Jesus did and suffered the things, wherein he is proposed as our example for our encouragement; and this was "for the joy that was set before him."

The ambiguous signification of the preposition (*propter*) *before*, hath given occasion to a peculiar interpretation of the words. For most commonly it signifies, *in the stead of*; one thing for another. It denotes here the *final moving cause* in the mind of Jesus Christ, for the doing what he did. He did it on account of the joy that was set before him.

*Joy*, is taken for the *things* in which he rejoiced, and on the account of which he endured the cross

and despised the shame, viz. the *glory* of God in the accomplishment of all the councils of divine wisdom and grace, and the *salvation* of all the elect. These were the two things that the mind of Christ valued above life, honor, reputation, and all that was dear to him.

How was this joy *set before* him? By God the Father, the *sovereign* Lord of this whole affair. And respect may be had to the eternal *constitution* of God, the covenant of redemption, between the Father and the Son; all the promises, prophecies, and predictions that were given out by divine revelation from the beginning of the world. And his faith of its accomplishment against oppositions, and under all his sufferings, is illustriously expressed, Isa. 1, 6—9.

§5. "He endured the cross and despised the shame."

*Pain* and *shame* are the two constituent parts of all outward sufferings; and they were both eminent in the death of the cross. No death more lingering, painful, and cruel; none so shameful, wherein he that suffered was in his dying hours exposed publicly to the scorn, contempt, and insults of the worst of men. "*He endured it;*" he *patiently* endured it, as the word signifies. The invincible patience of our Lord Jesus Christ enduring the cross, was manifested not only in the holy composure of his soul in all his sufferings to the last breath, expressed by the prophet, Isa. liii, 7, but in this also, that during his torments, being so unjustly, so ungratefully, so villanously dealt with by the Jews; he neither reviled, reproached, nor threatened them with that vengeance and destruction which it was in his power to bring upon them every moment; but he pitied them, and prayed for them to the last, that if it were possible their *sin* might be forgiven, Luke xxiii, 34; 1 Pet. ii, 21—23. Never was any



such example of patient enduring given in the world, before nor since; nor can any equal to it be given in human nature. To invincible patience he added *heroic magnanimity*; (αἰσχυρῆς καὶ ἀφρονεσῶς) "*despising the shame*," ignominy, contempt; it denotes shame from reproach and scorn, such as the Lord Jesus in his death was exposed to; an ignominy that the world, both Jews and Gentiles, long made use of to countenance themselves in their unbelief. This he *despised*, that is, he did not *faint* because of it; he valued it not, in comparison of the blessed and glorious effect of his sufferings, which was always in his eye.

The *blessed frame of mind* in our Lord Jesus in all his sufferings is that which the apostle proposeth for our *encouragement*, and to our *imitation*. And it is that which contains the exercise of all grace, faith, love, submission to the will of God, zeal for his glory, and compassion for the souls of men in their highest degree.

§6. "And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God;" in equal authority, glory, and power with God, in the rule and government of all. For the meaning of the words, see the Exposition on chap. i, 3; chap. viii, 1.

On the whole, we have an exact delineation of our Christian course in a time of persecution;—in the *blessed example* of it, the sufferings of Christ; the *assured consequent* of it, eternal glory; in a *direction* for the right discharge of our duty; which is the exercise of faith on Christ himself for assistance, as a sufferer and a Savior. And how great is *our encouragement* from the joy and glory that are set before us as the issue of all!

§7. Hence observe:

1. The foundation of our stability in faith and gospel profession, in times of trial and suffering, is a con-

stant looking to Christ, with expectation of aid and assistance; having encouraged us to our duty by his example. Nor shall we *endure* any longer than whilst the eye of our faith is fixed on him. From him alone do we derive our refreshments in all our trials.

2. It is a mighty encouragement to constancy and perseverance in believing, that he in whom we believe is the author and finisher of our faith. He both begins it in us, and carries it on to perfection.

3. The exercise of faith on Christ to enable us to persevere under difficulties and persecutions, respects him as a *Savior* and a *sufferer*, as the *author* and *finisher* of faith itself.

Herein is the Lord Christ our *great example*, in that he was influenced in all he did and suffered by a continual respect to the glory of God, and the salvation of the church. And,

5. If we duly propose these things to ourselves in all our sufferings, as they are set before us in the scripture, we shall not faint under them, nor be weary of them.

6. This manner of Christ's enduring the cross ought to be continually *before us*, that we may glorify God in conformity thereto, according to the measure of our attainments, when we are called to sufferings. If we can see the beauty and glory of it, we are safe.

7. If *he* went victoriously through his suffering, *we* also may be victorious through his aid, who is the author and finisher of our faith. And,

8. We have the highest instance that faith can conquer both fear and shame. Wherefore,

9. We should neither *think strange* of them, nor *fear* them on account of our profession of the gospel; seeing the Lord Jesus hath gone before in his conflict with them and conquest over them.

## VERSE 5.

*For consider him that endureth such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

§1. The same argument continued, with a special improvement of it. §2. What we are cautioned about; against being weary or faint. §3, 4. The suffering example of Christ proposed. §5, 6. Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle carries on the same argument, with respect to an especial improvement of it in this verse. (*Γαρ*) *for*, renders not a *reason* of what was spoken before, but denotes a progress to an especial *motive* to the duty exhorted to. Some copies read (*οὖν*) *therefore*, in a progressive exhortation.

The peculiar manner of the respect of faith to Christ is expressed by (*αναλογισασθε*) *consider*, compare things by their due proportion one to another. Whereas mention is made of *him* who endured, and of *what* he endured, we must inquire where the *emphasis* lies. If *he* suffered, if *he* endured such things, why should not we do so also? For he was the Son of God, the author and finisher our faith. Compute thus with yourselves, that if he, though being so great, so excellent, so infinitely exalted above us, yet endured such contradiction of sinners, ought we not to do so if called to it? Or else he calls us to the consideration of *what* he suffered in particular, as to the contradiction of sinners; such, *so great* contradiction, by comparing our own with them. And this sense the following words incline to; "for you have not yet resisted unto blood," as he did.

But although these things are thus distinguished, yet are they not to be divided. Both the *person* of Christ, and *what he suffered*, are proposed to our diligent consideration, and our impartial estimate of them, with respect to ourselves and our sufferings.

§2. "Lest ye be wearied;" the word (*καμνω*) signifies to labor, so as to bring on weariness; and to be sick, which also is accompanied with weariness. The apostle treating before of a race, he may easily be supposed to have respect to such as fainted therein through weariness. But the sense of the words is fully explained in Rev. ii, 3, "Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." To abide and persevere in suffering and labor for the name of Christ, is, "not to faint," or be wearied; wherefore to be wearied in this case, is to be so pressed and discouraged with the greatness or length of difficulties and trials, as to draw back, partially or totally, from the profession of the gospel. This I judge to be the frame of mind here cautioned against, viz. the want of life, vigor, and cheerfulness in profession, tending to a relinquishment of it; (*τη ψυχῃ ἐκλυεσθαι, animo defici et concidere*) to have the strength and vigor of the mind dissolved, so as to faint and fall; and it consists principally in a remission of the due acting of faith by all graces, and in all duties. It is faith that stirs up and engageth spiritual courage, resolution, patience, perseverance, prayer, and all preserving graces and duties; and on this failing our spiritual strength is dissolved, and we wax weary.

§3. And as to his sufferings, he proposeth the consideration of them in one special instance, and therein every word is emphatical;—it was contradiction he underwent;—and it was such, or so great, that it is not easy to be apprehended;—it was the contradiction of sinners;—and it was against himself immediately.

1. He endured contradiction. The word is used for any kind of opposition in things as well as words, and so may include the whole sufferings of Christ from men; but no doubt the apostle hath a peculiar respect

to the revilings and reproaches which he underwent; such as, "Let the king of Israel come down from the cross, and we will believe; he saved others, himself he cannot save." And,

2. The apostle intimates the *severity* and cruelty of these contradictions; and herein he refers us to the whole story of what was past at his death. Such contradiction, so bitter, so severe, so cruel; whatever the malicious wits of men, or suggestions of Satan, could invent or broach; whatever was venomous and evil, was cast upon him.

3. It was the contradiction of *sinners*; that is, such as gave no bounds to their wrath and malice. But withal the apostle seems to reflect on them, as to their *state* and condition: for it was the priests, the scribes and pharisees, who from first to last managed this contradiction; and these all boasted themselves to be just and righteous: but they deceived themselves; they were *sinners*, the worst of sinners.

4. It was contradiction against *himself* immediately, and, as it were, to his face. There is an *emphasis* in that expression (*εις εαυτον*) *against himself* in person; so they told him openly to his face, that he had a devil, that he was a seducer, &c. All this he *patiently endured*.

§4. The consideration of the Lord Christ's patient enduring these contradictions against himself, is proposed as the means to *preserve us* from being "weary and fainting in our minds"—by way of *motive*; for if he who in his own person was infinitely above all opposition of sinners, as the apostle states the case, Phil. ii, 5—8; yet for *our sakes* would undergo all; there is all the reason in the world why for *his sake* we should submit to our portion in them. By way of *precedent* and *example*; as it is urged by Peter, 1 Epist. ii, 21, 22.

By way of *deriving power* from him; for the due consideration of him herein will work a conformity in our minds and souls to him in his sufferings, which will assuredly preserve us from fainting.

§5. *Observe* hence:

1. Such things may befall us in the way of our profession, as are in themselves apt to weary and burden us, so as to solicit our minds to a relinquishment of them.

2. When we begin to be heartless, desponding, and weary of our sufferings, it is a dangerous disposition of mind, leaning towards a defection from the gospel. And,

3. We ought to watch against nothing more diligently, than the insensible, gradual prevailing of such a frame, if we mean to be faithful to the end.

4. If we design perseverance in a time of trouble and persecution, it is both our wisdom and our duty to keep up faith to a vigorous exercise; the want of this bespeaks a fainting in our minds. This is like the hands of Moses in the battle against Amalek.

§6. And we may farther *observe*;

1. That the malicious contradiction of wicked priests, scribes, and pharisees, against the truth, and its professors, is peculiarly suited to make them faint, if not opposed by vigorous actings of faith in Christ, and a due consideration of his sufferings in the same kind.

2. Whoever they are, that, by their contradictions to the truth, and them that profess it, stir up *persecution*, let them pretend what they will of righteousness, they are *sinners*, and that to a very dangerous degree.

3. If our minds grow weak, through a remission of the vigorous actings of faith, in a time of great contradiction to our profession, they will quickly grow *weary*, so as to give over, if not timely recovered.

4. The constant consideration of *Christ in his sufferings* is the best means to keep up faith to its due exercise in all times of trial.

VERSE 4.

*Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin.*

§1. Connexion of the words. §2. The party to be opposed, sin. §3. The way by resisting and striving. §4, 5. Observations.

§1. **H**AVING proposed the great example of Jesus Christ, and given directions to the improvement of it, the apostle proceeds to more general arguments for the confirmation of his exhortation to patience and perseverance in times of suffering. "You have not yet resisted unto blood." He grants that they had met with many sufferings already; but they had been so restrained, as not to proceed to life and blood. And he hath respect to what he had affirmed of their past and present sufferings, chap. x, 32—34. (See the Exposition of the place.)

He intimates that they might yet expect "*blood.*" Two things are included; *first*, that those who are engaged in the profession of the gospel, have no security, but that they may be called to the utmost and last sufferings by blood on account of it; and, *secondly*, that whatever befalls us on this side, blood is to be looked on as a fruit of divine tenderness and mercy.

§2. The party with whom their contest was in what they suffered, was—"*sin.*" The apostle still abides in his *allusion* to strife for victory in public games; therein every one had an *adversary* whom he was to contend with; so have believers; and it was not their *persecutors* directly, but *sin* in them, that the apostle alludes to. But whereas sin is but an accident or quality, it cannot act itself, but only *in the subjects*

wherein it is. When men persecute the church, it is *sin* acting itself in malice, hatred of the truth, blind zeal, envy, and bloody cruelty, that engageth and ruleth them in all they do. With all these *effects* and fruits of sin in them believers contend.

Again, they have a contest with sin in *themselves*.

So the apostle Peter tells us, that fleshly lusts war against the soul, 1 Epist. ii, 11. They violently endeavor the overthrow of our faith and obedience.

§3. The *way* or manner of the opposition to be made to sin, is by *resisting* and *striving*. They are both military terms, expressing fortitude of mind in resolving and executing. There is included a supposition of a vigorous and violent assault, such as enemies make in battle. It is not a *ludicrous* contest that we are called to, but it is for our lives and *souls*; and our adversary will spare neither pains nor hazard to win them. Hence we are to *arm ourselves*, to take to ourselves the whole armor of God, to watch, to be strong, to quit ourselves like men. They are all included in the sense of these two words.

§4. And we may *observe*,

1. That the proportioning of the *degrees* of sufferings, and the disposal of them as to times and seasons, is in the hand of God. Some shall suffer in their goods and liberties, some in their lives, some at one time, some at another, as it seems good to him. Let us therefore every one be contented with our present lot and portion in these things.

2. It is highly dishonorable to faint in the cause of Christ and the gospel, under lesser sufferings, when we know there are greater to be undergone by ourselves and others on the same account.

3. That signal diligence and watchfulness is required to our profession of the gospel, considering what en-



enemy we have to conflict with. This is *sin* in all the ways whereby it acts its power and subtilty, which are unspeakable.

4. It is an honorable warfare to be engaged against such an enemy as *sin* is. This being only the contrariety that is to the nature and will of God himself, it is highly honorable to be engaged against it.

5. Though the world cannot, or will not, yet Christians can distinguish between resisting the *authority of men*, and the resistance of *sin* lurking under the cloak of that authority.

§5. 1. There is no room for negligence or sloth in this conflict.

2. They do but deceive themselves, who hope to preserve their faith in times of trial, without the utmost watchful diligence against the assaults and impressions of *sin*. Yea,

3. The vigor of our minds in the constant exercise of spiritual strength is to this end required.

4. Without this we shall be surprised, wounded, and at last destroyed by our enemy.

5. They that would abide faithful in their profession in times of trial, ought constantly to bear in mind, and be armed against the worst of evils. This will preserve them from being shaken or surprised with those lesser evils which may befall them, when things come not to an extremity.

#### VERSE 5.

*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*

§1. The apostle proceeds to a new argument, that the afflictions of the faithful are chastisements. §2. (I.) Explanation of the words. Ye have forgotten the exhortation. §3. Which speaketh as to children. §4, 5. The exhortation itself: §6, 7. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle in these words proceeds to a new argument, whereby to press his exhortation to patience and perseverance under *sufferings*, from the nature and end, on the part of God, of all those sufferings; for they are not only necessary as *testimonies* to the truth, but they are *chastisements* wherein God hath a blessed design towards us. And this argu- he enforceth with sundry considerations, to the end of ver. 13.

This multitudes have found by experience, that their outward pressing sufferings from the world have been purifying chastisements from God to their souls; by them have they been awakened, revived, mortified to the world, and, as the apostle expresseth it, made partakers of the holiness of God, to their inexpressible advantage and consolation. And,

Thereby doth God defeat the counsels and expectations of the world, having a *design* to accomplish by *their agency* which they know nothing of; for those very reproaches, imprisonments, and stripes, with the loss of goods, and danger of their lives, which the world applies to their ruin, God at the same time makes use of for their refining, consolation, and joy. In all these things is the divine wisdom and goodness for ever to be admired.

§2. (I.) "And ye have forgotten the exhortation." There is in the foregoing words a tacit rebuke, that they were ready to faint under their lesser trials; the reason, saith he, why you are so ready to faint, is because you have not attended to the direction and encouragement provided for you. This indeed is the rise of all our miscarriages, and it is the height of pride and ingratitude not to comply with God's entreaties.

"You have forgotten;" a thing we mind not when we ought, and as we ought, we may be justly said to have forgotten it; whether by the exhortation we understand the divine words themselves, as recorded in scripture, or the things exhorted to.—*Note*, The want of a diligent consideration of the provision God hath made in scripture for our encouragement to duty, and comfort under difficulties, is a sinful forgetfulness, and of dangerous consequence to our souls.

For "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope," Rom. xv, 4.

§3. "Which speaketh unto you, as unto children." The scripture is not a dumb and silent letter; it hath a voice in it, the voice of God himself; and *speaking* is frequently ascribed to it, John vii, 42, &c. And if we hear not the voice of God in it continually, it is because of our unbelief, Heb. iii, 7—15. The word which was spoken so long before by Solomon to the church in that generation, is said to be spoken to these Hebrews; for the Holy Ghost is always present in the word, and speaks in it equally and alike to the church in all ages. He speaks as immediately to us as if we were the first and only persons to whom he spoke. It argues, it pleads, it maintains a holy conference with us; it presseth the mind and will of God upon us; and we shall find the force of its arguing if we keep it not off by our unbelief.

What infinite condescension is it in God, that he speaks unto us as unto sons! for whereas these words have respect to a time of trouble and chastisement, it is of unspeakable concernment to us, to consider God under the relation of a *Father*, and that in them he speaks to us as unto sons. The words originally spo-

ken by *Solomoni*, were spoken by *God himself*; "He speaks unto us as unto *"sons,"* because our gratuitous adoption is the foundation of God's gracious dealings with us; and this, if any thing, is calculated to bind our minds, in the firmest manner, to a diligent compliance with this divine exhortation. *Note*, Usually,

God gives the most evident pledges of their adoption to believers, when in their sufferings, and under their afflictions; then do they most stand in need of them, then do they most set off the love and care of God towards us.

"My son," is an application that a wise and tender father makes use of to reduce his child to consideration and composure of mind, when he sees him nigh to despondency, under pain, sickness, trouble, or the like; "My son, let it not be thus with thee." God sees us under our afflictions and sufferings, ready to fall into discomposures, with excesses of one kind or another; and thereon applies himself to us, with this endearing expression,

§4. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." "Despise not *thou*," that every individual person may conceive himself spoken to in particular, and hear God speaking these words to him: What is this *chastening* of the Lord? The word (*παιδεία*) is variously rendered; *doctrine, institution, correction, chastisement, discipline*; and it is such correction as is used in the liberal, ingenuous education of children by their parents, Ephes. vi, 4. They are indeed God's *chastisements* of us, for our education and instruction in his family; and if we duly consider them as such, applying ourselves to learn what we are taught, we shall pass through them more to our advantage than usually we do.

That which we are cautioned against, with respect to the Lord's chastening, is (*μη ελιγῶμεν*) that we *despise*

*it not.* The word is nowhere used in the scripture but in this place; it signifies to *set lightly by*, not to value any thing according to its worth and use; and not to esteem them as we ought, not to improve them to their proper end; not to comply with the will of God in them, is, *interpretatively to despise them*; wherefore, the evil cautioned against, is, want of a due regard to divine admonitions and instructions in our troubles, either through inadvertency, or stout heartedness. *Note,* It is a tender case to be under troubles and afflictions, which requires our utmost diligence, watchfulness, and care about it; God is in it, acting as a father and a teacher, if *he* be not duly attended to, our loss by them will be inexpressible.

§. The next caution is, that we “faint not when we are (ελεγχόμενοι) *reproved*,” for this is the next evil we are liable to under troubles and afflictions. The word signifies a *reproof by rational conviction*; the same thing materially with *chastisement* is intended; but under this formal consideration, that there is in that *chastisement a convincing reproof*. God, by discovering to ourselves our hearts and ways, it may be in things which we before took no notice of, *convinceth us of the necessity of our troubles and afflictions*. He makes us understand, wherefore it is that he is displeased with us; and what is our duty hereon is declared, Habak. ii, 1—4. Namely, to *accept of his reproof, to humble ourselves before him, and to betake ourselves to the righteousness of faith for relief*.

§6. We now observe;

1. It is a blessed effect of divine wisdom that the sufferings we undergo from men, for the profession of the gospel, shall be also chastisements of divine love for our spiritual advantage.

2. The gospel never requires our suffering, but when, as we shall find if we examine ourselves, we stand in need of the divine chastisement.

3. When by the wisdom of God we can discern that what we suffer is, on the one hand, for the glory of God and the gospel; and is, on the other, necessary, for our own sanctification, we shall be patient and persevering.

4. Where there is sincerity in faith and obedience, let not men despond when called to suffer for the gospel, seeing it is the design of God by those sufferings to purify and cleanse them from their present evil frames.

§7. 1. When God's *chastisements* in our troubles and afflictions are *reproofs* also; when he gives us a sense in them of his displeasure against our sins, and we are reprov'd by him; yet even then he requires of us, that we should not *faint* nor despond, but cheerfully apply ourselves to his mind and calls. This is the hardest case a believer can be exercised with, when his troubles and afflictions are also in his own conscience *reproofs* for sin.

2. A sense of God's displeasure against our sins, and of his reproving us for them, is *consistent* with an evidence of our adoption; yea, may be itself *an evidence* of it, as the apostle proves in the next verses.

3. The sum of instruction in this verse is, that a due consideration of this sacred truth—that all our troubles, persecutions, and afflictions are *divine chastisements* and reproofs, whereby God evidenceth to us our adoption, and *his instructing* of us for our advantage—is an effectual means to preserve us in patience and perseverance to the end of our trials.

## VERSE 6.

*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

§1. The same divine testimony continued. §2. The first part of the testimony explained by several instructive particulars. §3. The second branch explained. §4. Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle proceeding with the divine testimony, retaining the sense of the whole exactly, changeth the words in the latter clause; for instead of, "and as a father the son in whom he delighteth," with whom he is pleased, he supplies "and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." In the *Proverbs* the words are *exegetical* of those foregoing, by an allusion to an earthly parent; "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." In this text they are farther *explanatory* of what was before affirmed; but the sense in both places is absolutely the same.

This, saith he, is the way of God; thus it seems good to him to deal with his children; thus he may do, because of his sovereign dominion over all; may not he do what he will with his own? This he doth in infinite wisdom, for their good and advantage; as also to evidence his love to them, and care of them.

§2. In the first part of the testimony given to the sovereignty and wisdom of God, in the ways and methods of his dealings with his children, we are instructed,

1. That love is antecedent to chastening; he chastens whom he loves. The love, therefore, here intended, is the love of adoption; that is, the love of benevolence, whereby he makes men his children, and his love of complacency in them when they are so.

2. *Chastising is an effect* of his love. It is not only consequential to, but springs from it: wherefore, there is nothing properly *penal* in the chastisements of believers. *Punishment* proceeds from love to *justice*, not from love to the *person* punished; but chastisement is from love to the *person* chastised, though mixed with displeasure against *sin*.

3. It is required in *chastisement*, that the person be in a state wherein there is sin, or that he be a *sinner*; so that sin should have an immediate influence to the *chastisement*, as the meritorious cause of it: for the end of it is, "to take away sin," to subdue it, to mortify it, to increase holiness. There is no chastisement in heaven or in hell. Not in *heaven*, because there is no sin; not in *hell*, because there is no amendment. Chastisement, therefore, is a companion of them that are "in the way," and of them only.

4. Divine love and chastening in this life are *inseparable*. "Whom he loveth;" that is, *whomsoever* he loveth, "he chasteneth;" none goes free. It is true, there are different *degrees* and measures of chastisements, which comparatively make some seem to have none, and some to have *nothing else*. But absolutely the divine (*παιδεία*) *instructive chastisement*, is extended to *all* the family of God, as we shall see.

5. Where *chastisement* evidenceth itself not to be penal—as it doth many ways, with respect to God the author of it, and those who are chastised—it is a *broad seal* set to the patent of our adoption, which the apostle proves in the following verses.

6. This being the way and manner of God's dealing with his children, there is all the reason in the world why we should acquiesce in his sovereign wisdom therein, and not faint under his chastisement:



7. No particular person hath any reason to complain of his portion in chastisement, seeing this is the way of God's dealing with *all* his children, 1 Pet. iv, 12; v, 9.

§3. The latter clause of this divine testimony, as expressed by the apostle—"and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"—being, as it is generally understood, the same with the former assertion, expressing somewhat more earnestness, may seem to need no farther exposition, the same truth being contained in the one and the other. But, I confess, that in my judgment there is something *peculiar* in it, which I shall propose, and leave to the reader.

The particle ( $\delta\epsilon$ ) *and*, may rather be, *etiam*, *even*, or *also*, *moreover*. The verb "*scourgeth*," argues at least a *peculiar degree* or measure in chastisement, above what is ordinary; and it is never used but to express a high degree of suffering. A scourging is the *utmost* which is used in ( $\piαιδεια$ ) *corrective instruction*. Wherefore the utmost that God inflicts on any in this world is included in this expression. ( $\Piαραδεχεται$ ) *receiveth*, *accepteth*, *owneth*, *avoweth*; the word whereby God declares his rest and acquiescence in Christ himself, Esai. xlii, 1; so that it includes an *especial approbation*. ( $\Piαντα υιων$ ) *every son*, is not to be taken universally, but is restrained to such only as God doth *so accept*. I am, therefore, induced to judge this to be the meaning of the words, *viz.* "yea, also, he *severely chastiseth* above the ordinary measure those sons whom he accepts, and *peculiarly delights in*." This gives a distinct sense, and doth not make it a mere repetition; and the truth contained herein is highly necessary to the support and consolation of many of God's children. For when they are *signalized* by affliction; when all must take notice that they are *scourged* in a peculiar

manner, and suffer beyond the ordinary measure of children, they are ready to despond (as Job, and David, and Heman) and be utterly discouraged. But a due apprehension of its being *the way* of God to give the severest trials, exercises, and scourges to them whom he loves and peculiarly delights in, will make them lift up their heads and rejoice in all their tribulations.

§4. *Obs.* That in all our afflictions, the resignation of ourselves to the sovereign pleasure, infinite wisdom, and goodness of God, is the only means of preserving us from fainting, weariness, or neglect of duty. After all our arguings, desires, and pleas, this is what we must come to. See Job xxxiii, 12, 13; xxxiv, 18, 19, 28, 31, 33; xlii, 4, 6.

## VERSE 7.

*If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*

§1. To endure chastening, what. §2. God's conduct towards his children, so enduring. §3. The propriety of chastisement from his paternal relation to them. §4. Observations.

§1. “**I**<sub>F</sub> (υπομνετε) ye endure chastening;” there is in the word a *supposition*, “If you do *comply* with the exhortation.” A mere suffering of things calamitous, which is common to mankind, is no evidence of a gracious reception with God. “If you *endure*,” that is, with faith, submission, patience, and perseverance, so as not to faint.

If, saith he, afflictions, trials, and troubles befall you, such as God sends for the chastisement of his children, and you undergo them with patience and perseverance; if you faint not under them, nor desert your duty, then,

2. “God (προσφερεται) *dealeth with you, as with*

sons;" *he offereth himself unto you*—not as an enemy, not as a judge, not as towards strangers, but—as a *father* towards children. I think, that the rendering, he "*dealeth with you,*" doth scarce reach the import of the word. Now the meaning is not, that on *their performance* of this duty God would act towards them "*as sons,*" for this he did in all their chastisements themselves, as the apostle proves; but rather hereby, "*it will evidently appear,* even to yourselves, that so God deals with you, you shall be able in all of them to see the discipline and actings of a father towards his sons." As such he will *present himself* to you.

§3. "For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Think it not strange, it is what necessarily follows the relation; "for what son?" The apostle doth not take the allusion from matter of *fact*, but of *right* and duty; for there are many, too many, sons that are never chastised of their fathers, which commonly ends in their ruin. But he supposeth two things: That every son will more or less stand in need of chastisement, and that every wise, careful father will, in such cases, chasten his son. Wherefore it is evident, that God's chastening of believers is his "dealing with them as sons."

§4. Hence *observe,*

1. Afflictions or chastisements are no pledges of our adoption, but when they are *endured* with patience. If it be otherwise with us, they are nothing but the tokens of anger and displeasure; so that,

2. It is the *internal frame* of the heart and mind under chastisements, that lets in a sense of God's gracious design towards us in them. Otherwise, "no man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him;" no conclusion can be made one way or other, from our being afflicted. If our hearts tumultuate, repine;

faint. and grow weary, no sense of paternal love can enter into them, until they are rebuked, and brought into composure.

3. This way of dealing *becomes* the relation between God and believers, as father and children, viz. that he should chastise, and they should bear it patiently. This *makes it evident*, that there is such a relation between them.

VERSE 8.

*But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

§1. The certainty of the rule. §2. What implied in chastisement. §3. No true son exempted from it. §4. Those who are not chastised are bastards, and not sons. §5. Hence the reasonableness of our not fainting under them. §6. Observations.

§1. **T**HE rule which the apostle hath laid down concerning chastisements, as a necessary inseparable adjunct of that relation between father and sons, is so certain in nature and grace, that (as he now proceeds to shew) those who have *no chastisements* are no *sons*, no legitimate children.

§2. There is in the words a supposition of a "state without chastisement." Take "chastisement" *materially* for every thing that is grievous or afflictive, and no man is *absolutely* without it. But *comparatively*, some even in *this* sense are freed from chastisement. Such the psalmist speaks of, "There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men," Psal. lxxiii, 4, 5; which he gives as a character of the *worst sort* of men in the world.

But this is not the *chastisement* here intended. We have shewed before, that it is an *instructive correction*; and the design of the place requires that signification;

and this some professors may be without. Whatever *trouble* they may meet with, yet they are not under divine *chastisements*, for their good. Yet the apostle's design may reach farther, namely, to awaken them who were under troubles, but were not sensible of their being *divine chastisements*; and so lost all the benefit of them, since without that they could have no *evidence* of their *sonships*.

§3. To confirm his inference, the apostle adds the substance of his rule, "whereof all are partakers." The *Syriac* reads it: "Wherewith *every man* is chastised;" but it must be restrained to *sons*. This therefore the apostle is positive in, that it is altogether vain to look for spiritual sonship without chastisement. They who are sons are partakers of it, every one his own share. There is a general measure of afflictions assigned to the church, head, and members, whereof every one is to receive his part, Col. i, 24.

§4. The inference on this supposition is, that such persons are "bastards, and not sons." Their state is expressed both positively and negatively, to give the greater *emphasis* to the assertion. Besides, if he had only said, "ye are bastards," it would not have been so evident that they were *not sons*, for bastards are sons also. But now he clearly shews they are not such as have a right to the paternal inheritance. *Gifts* they may have, and *riches*, bestowed on them; but they have no right of *inheritance* by virtue of their sonship, if without chastisement.

§4. Hence the great force and propriety of what is added, *viz.* that we *should not faint* under our trials and afflictions. For if they are all such divine chastisements, as without which we can have no evidence of our relation to God as a *father*; yea, without a real participation of them, we can have no right to

the eternal *inheritance*; it is at once unwise and wicked to be weary of them, or to faint under them.

§6. And we may *observe* hence:

1. There are no sons of God, no real partakers of adoption, that are without some crosses and chastisements in this world. They deceive themselves who expect to live in God's family, and not to be under his chastening discipline. And this should make every one of us very contented with our own lot and portion, whatever it be.

2. It is an act of spiritual wisdom in all our troubles, to discern divine paternal chastisements, without which we shall never behave ourselves well under them, nor obtain any advantage by them.

3. There are in the visible church, or among professors, some that have no right to the heavenly inheritance. They are *bastards*; sons that may have gifts and outward enjoyments, but they are not *heirs*. And this is a great evidence of it in any;—that they are not *chastised*. They may be in *trouble* like other men, (for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward) but they are not sensible of divine chastisement in them; they do not receive them, bear them, nor improve them as such.

4. The joyous state of *freedom from affliction* is such as we ought always to *watch over* with great diligence, lest it should be a leaving us out of the family of God. I do not say, on the other hand, that we may *desire* afflictions, but we may pray, that we may not want any pledge of our adoption, leaving the ordering and disposing of all things to the sovereign will and pleasure of God.

## VERSES 9, 10.

*Moreover, we have had fathers of our flesh, who chastened us; and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? for they verily for a few days chastened us, after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

§1. The design and nature of the argument. §3, 4 (I.) Exposition. The special end of divine chastening. §5. What God requires of us under them; subjection. §6. The consequent of this subjection. §7. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HE design of these words is, farther to evince the *equity* of the patient enduring divine chastisement: which is done on such cogent principles of conviction as cannot be avoided, and which are of two sorts:— the first is from the *light of nature*; that children ought to obey their parents, and submit to them in all things: the other is from the *light of grace*; that there is an *answerable relation* between God and believers, as is between natural parents and their children, though it be not of the same nature. The whole strength of the argument depends on these undoubted principles:

§2. (I.) “We have had *fathers of our flesh*.” That learned man did but indulge his unbridled fancy, who would have these “*fathers*” to be the *teachers of the Jewish church*, which, how they should come to be opposed to the *Father of spirits*, he (as might be expected) could not imagine. Those from whom we derive our flesh “*chastened us*,” they had a *right* to do so, and they did it “*as seemed good to them*.” It is not said, that they did it for their *mere pleasure* without respect to the rule or equity, for it is the example of *good parents* that is intended. But they did it according to their *best discretion*; wherein they might fail, both as to the causes and the measure of

chastisement. The exercise of this right is "*for a few days*;" either a few of our *own days*; or it may respect the *advantage* which is to be obtained by such chastisements, which is only the regulation of our affections for a *little season*. And (*εὐπειρομεθα*) *we gave them reverence*; an ingenuous, modest submission, as opposite to stubbornness and frowardness. We were kept in a proper dutiful temper of mind; we did not desert the family of our parents, nor grow weary of their discipline, so as to be discouraged from our duty.

§3. "Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the *Father of spirits*," of our spirits? So the opposition requires; the fathers of *our flesh*, and the Father of *our spirits*; the rational soul, which is immediately created and infused, having *no other father* but God himself. See Numb. xvi, 22; Zech. xii, 1; Jer. xxxviii, 16, I will not deny, but that the signification of the word here may be *farther* extended, so as to comprise also the state and *frame* of our spirits in their restoration and rule, wherein also they are subject to God alone: but his being the immediate *creator* of them is primarily regarded.

And this is the fundamental reason of our patient submission to God in all our afflictions, that our very *souls are his*, the immediate product of his divine power, and under his rule alone. May he not do what he will with his own? Shall the potsherd contend with its maker?

His general end and design therein is our *profit* or advantage. This being once well fixed, takes off all disputes in this case. *Men* in their chastisements do at best but conjecture at the event, and are no way able to effect it. But what *God* designs shall infallibly come to pass; for he himself will accomplish, and make the means of it certainly effectual.



§4. "That we might be partakers of his holiness." The *holiness* of God is either that which he hath in himself, or that which he approves of, and requires in us. The first is the infinite purity of the divine nature, which is absolutely incommunicable; nevertheless, we may be said to be *partakers of it*, in a peculiar manner, by virtue of our interest in God, as God; as also by the *effects* of it in us, Ephes. iv, 24; as we are said to be made "partakers of the *divine nature*," 2Pet. i, 4; which also is the holiness of God in the latter sense, or that which he requires of us, and approves in us.

Whereas therefore holiness consists in the mortification of our lusts and affections, in the gradual renovation of our natures, and the sanctification of our souls; the carrying on and increase of these things in us is what God designs in all his chastisements. And whereas next to our participation of Christ, by the imputation of his righteousness to us, this is the greatest privilege, glory, honor, and benefit, that in this world we can be made partakers of; we have no reason to be weary of God's chastisements, which are designed for so valuable an end.

§5. That which is required of us as children is, that we "*be in subjection to him, as unto the Father of spirits.*" This answers to the having our earthly parents in reverence before mentioned. The same which the apostle Peter calls, "humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God," 1 Pet. v, 6; and there may be respect to the disobedient son under the law, who refused to subject himself to his parents, or to reform upon their correction, Deut. xxi, 18; which I rather think, because of the consequent assigned to it—"and live;" whereas the refractory son was to be stoned to death. And this subjection to God consists in an acquiescency in his right and sovereignty, to do what he

will with his own; an acknowledgment of his righteousness and wisdom in all his dealings with us; a sense of his care and love, with a due apprehension of the end of his chastisements; a diligent application of ourselves to his mind and will, as to what he calls us to, in an especial manner at that season; in keeping our souls by faith and patience from weariness and despondency; and finally, in a full resignation of ourselves to his will, as to the matter, manner, times, and continuance of our affliction. And where these things are not in some degree, we cast off the yoke of God, and are not in due subjection to him; which is the lands inhabited by the sons of Belial.

§6. Once more; the consequent of this subjection to God in our chastisements is, that "*we shall live;*" *and so we shall live.* Though in their own nature they seem to tend to death, or the destruction of the flesh, yet it is for *life* they are designed; which is the encouraging consequent, which *shall be* the infallible effect of of them, 2 Cor. iv, 16—18; the increase of spiritual life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come. The rebellious son who would not submit himself to correction was to *die without mercy*; but they who are in subjection to God in his chastisements, *shall live* here and hereafter.

§7. (II.) And we may now *observe*:

1. As it is the duty of parents to chastise their children, if need be, and of children to submit thereto; so it is good for us to have had the experience of a reverential submission to paternal chastisements, as from whence we may be convinced of the equity and necessity of submission to God in all our afflictions.

2. No man can understand the benefit of divine chastisements, who understands not the excellency of a participation of God's holiness. No man can find

any good in a bitter portion, who understands not the benefit of health. If we have not a due valuation of this blessed privilege, it is impossible we should ever make a right judgment concerning our afflictions.

3. If under chastisements we find not an increase of holiness, in some special instances or degrees, they are utterly lost, we have nothing but the trouble and sorrow of them.

4. There can be no greater pledge nor evidence of divine love in affliction, than this, that God designs by them to make us partakers of his holiness, to make us more like him.

#### VERSE 11.

*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

§1. Connexion and design. §2. (I.) Exposition. Affliction, not joyous but grievous. §3. Chastisement beneficial. It yieldeth the fruit of righteousness. §4. Which is peaceable. §5. The season of yielding fruit. §6. To whom. §7. (II.) Observations. God's chastisements will be matter of sorrow to us, §8, 9. Other observations.

§1. **T**HIS is the close of the apostle's arguing about sufferings and afflictions, their use, and our duty in bearing them with patience. The same argument he insisted upon, 2 Cor. iv, 17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The trouble and sorrow wherewith chastisement is accompanied he takes for granted, he will not contend about it; but he takes off all its weight, by opposing to it the superior benefit.

§2. "Now no chastening." &c. literally, "but every chastisement at present seems not to be of joy;" that is, none doth seem to be so. *Now*; not as an adverb of time, but as a note of attention. *Every chastisement*, not any accepted; for what is affirmed is of the

very nature of chastisements. If any thing evil befall a man, and it be no ways dolorous to him, it may be a judgment, but it is not a chastisement to him. *For the present*; that is, whilst it is actually on us, whilst we suffer under it, especially in its first ingress and assault; whilst the wound they give to the spirit is fresh, before it be mollified by faith and submission to God.

*It seemeth not to be joyous, but grievous*; that is, whatever be spoken of the good of chastisement, it represents itself otherwise to us; it appears with another face to us, and we cannot but make another judgment of it. The original is, "*it is not of joy, but of sorrow.*" The apostle speaks not of it here, as to its effects, but as to its nature; and so it belongs not to things joyous and pleasant. It is not a sweet concoction, but a bitter portion. It is in the nature of every chastisement, to be a matter of sorrow and grief at present to the chastised.

§3. In the balance against this matter of sorrow in divine chastisements, the apostle lays down the advantage and benefit of it. "It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." It *yieldeth fruit*; not it *will* do so, but it *doth* so. It is not a dead useless thing. When God purgeth his vine, it is that it may "bear more fruit," John xv, 2. Where he dresseth the ground, it shall "bring forth herbs meet for himself," Heb. vi, 8. By this therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, "to take away his sin," Isa. xxvii, 9.

This fruit is "*the fruit of righteousness*," that which righteousness, bears, or brings forth. Neither our doing nor our suffering is the cause of our righteousness, but they promote it in us, and increase its fruit. Wherefore, by "*righteousness*" in this place, our sanctification, or the internal principle of holiness or obe-

dience is intended; and the fruits hereof are its increase in the more vigorous actings of all graces, and their effects in all duties; especially patience, submission to the will of God, weanedness from the world, mortification of sin, heavenly mindedness, purity of heart, readiness for the cross, and the like, Rom. v, 3—5; John xv, 2—4.

§4. This fruit of righteousness which chastisement yieldeth is also *peaceable*. "The work of righteousness shall be peace," Isa. xxxii, 17. When we are chastened, and when these fruits are brought forth in us, they are a high evidence that God is at peace with us, and that he designs our eternal good, Rom v, 3—5. They bring in peace to our minds. Afflictions are apt to put our minds into disorder; our affections will tumultuate, and raise great contests in our souls; but by these fruits of righteousness our hearts are quieted, our minds composed, all tumults allayed, and we are enabled to possess our own souls in patience.

§5. The *season* wherein they yield this fruit, is "*afterwards*;" that is, after we have been a little exercised with them. This effect, it may be, doth not appear at first; we have their surprisal, as Job had, to conflict with, which suspends for awhile the production of these fruits. They first tend to subdue the flesh, to root up weeds, thorns, and briars, to break up the stubborn fallow-ground, and then to cherish the seeds of righteousness.

§6. So it is added, "unto them which are *exercised* thereby." The word here used signifies an exercise with diligence and vehemence, there being an allusion in it to those who stripped themselves naked, and so put out all their strength in their public games, or contest for mastery. Wherefore to be exercised by chastisement, is to have all our spiritual strength, all our

faith and patience, tried to the utmost, and acted in all things suitably to the mind and will of God.

§7. *Obs.* (II.) When God designeth any thing as a chastisement, it is in vain to endeavor to keep off a *sense* of it; it shall be a matter of sorrow to us. Men are apt in their trials to think it a point of courage and resolution to keep off a sense of them, so as not to be affected with grief about them. It is esteemed by some a piece of pusillanimity to mourn, or to be affected with sorrow about them. It is true, indeed, so far as they are from men, and sufferings for the gospel, there is an heroic frame of spirit required for undergoing them, so that it may appear we are in nothing terrified by our adversaries; but there can be no pusillanimity in us towards God. It is our duty to take in a *deep sense* of his rebukes; and if he designs any thing befalling us as a *chastisement*, it is in vain for us to contend, that it may not be a matter of sorrow to us. For if it yet be not so, it is but an entrance into his more severe dealing with us. He will not cease till he hath broken the fierceness and tamed the pride of our spirits, and have brought us, like obedient children, to submit ourselves under his mighty hand.

§8. *Observe* farther;

1. Not to take in a sense of sorrow in affliction, through stoutheartedness, is to *despise* the chastening of the Lord, ver. 5. The sorrow intended which accompanies chastisement, is that which the apostle terms (Λυπη κατὰ Θεον, 2 Cor. vii, 9,) "Sorrow according to God," or after a godly sort; it is not a wailing of the flesh upon a sense of pain; it is not the disorder of our affections upon their encounter with things grievous in their present state of ease; it is not a heartless despondency under our pressures, enfeebling us for our duties; but a *filial* sense of God's displeasure, accom-

panied with nature's aversion from things evil and grievous to it.

2. The nature and end of afflictions are not to be measured by our present sense of them; at present they are dolorous, but the great relief under what is grievous at present is, the due consideration of their end and tendency, as appointed of God. And,

3. All the trouble of afflictions is but *for the present*; at most but for the little while we are to continue in this world; within a very short time we shall leave them behind us for evermore.

§9. 1. Those who cannot see an excellency in the abounding of the fruits of righteousness before described, can never apprehend that there is either good or benefit in chastisements; for this alone is that which the apostle proposeth to answer all that is grievous or evil in them; but these things believers value above life itself, and can esteem well of every thing, be it never so sharp to the flesh, that doth promote these fruits in our souls.

2. We can never find any benefit in chastisements unless we are *exercised* by them; that is, that all our graces are stirred up by them to an holy, constant exercise; for hereby alone do they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

3. It is the fruit of righteousness alone, that will bring us peace; give us a sense of peace with God, peace in ourselves, and, as far as possible, peace with all others. And,

4. Grace in afflictions will at length quietly compose the mind under the storm raised by them, and give it a peaceful rest.

5. Herein lies the wisdom of faith in this matter, not to pass a judgment on chastisement from the present sense we have of what is evil and dolorous in

them, but from their end and use, which are blessed and glorious.

VERSES 12, 13.

*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed.*

§1. Introduction. §2, 3. (I.) The several parts of the words explained. §4—6. Making straight paths for our feet, what. §7. The enforcement of the duty. §8, 9. (II.) Observations.

§1. **I**N these verses an entrance is made to the second part of the chapter, which is designed for the *application* of the doctrine concerning sufferings, afflictions, and chastisements, before insisted on; for the right understanding of the mind of the Holy Ghost in the words, we must take notice, that there is a *supposition* included of some failure in the Hebrews as to their courage and constancy in suffering; at least that they were in great danger of it, and that it began to affect the minds of many; and perhaps greatly to prevail in some among them; this he had insinuated before in the entrance of his discourse on this subject, ver. 3—5, and now resumes it as the ground of his address.

That part of the exhortation which is contained in ver. 12, is taken from Isaiah xxxv, 8; and the way of its proposal is in continued *metaphors*, in answer to the first prescription of duty which was *to run a race*, or strive for a victory, ver. 1. Wherefore, the exhortation is applied to those parts of the body which are of principal use in the gymnastic exercises, *viz.* the *hands*, the *knees*, and the *feet*, whereby the body putteth forth all its strength, to obtain the prize; the hands and knees being the principal seat of strength and activity.

§2. (I.) "Lift up the hands that hang down;"

VOL. IV. 42



(*ταπειμενας*) *weakened* and *dissolved* in their strength, whence of course they *hang down*; which is an evidence of being *weary*, faint, unready, and on the point of giving over. "And the *feeble knees*;" (*παρὰλελυμενα, soluta, dissoluta, labantia,*) *debilitated*, weak, whose nervous vigor is dissolved; so in great weakness, fear, and despondency, the *knees* are said to *smile together*, Nah. ii, 10; Dan. v, 6.

In both expressions we have a description of a man *heartless*, or *slothful*, or so faint in running a race, as to be ready to cast off all hopes of success, and to give over.

§3. It is the same kind of distemper which affects these several parts; and therefore the apostle prescribes the same remedy to both; (*ανορθωσατε, surripite, erigite*) *raise them up* to a due state and posture; *set them right again*; apply them to their duty; so in the cure of the woman who had the infirmity, wherewith she was bowed down, we render the same word "*made straight*," Luke xiii, 13; or *upright* again.

Wherefore the spiritual sense of the words, or meaning of the similitudes, is plain, and there is no necessity to make a distribution of parts, as to what is particularly and separately intended by the *hands* and *knees*; for by the same kind of defect in both, the fault of the whole is described; which is such a decay in Christian courage and resolution, as brings along with it a great weakness and unreadiness for duty; proceeding from a despondency as to success, and weariness of duty; in *them* do our hands hang down, and our knees grow feeble.

§4. "And make straight paths for your feet." The first part of the exhortation concerned the *inward frame of our minds*; that which now follows looks to our *ways*, walking, and conversation with respect to

others; according as our path is, right and straight, or crooked and uneven, so will our course be. It is therefore highly incumbent on us to look well to the paths wherein we are going.

The direction seems to be taken from Prov. iv, 26. "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established;" or rather, "all thy ways shall be ordered aright;" which is the sense of this place.

In order to discover the duty here prescribed, we must consider;—what are the paths of our feet; and —how we are to make them straight.

§5. (Τροχίας) Our *paths*; the original word signifies (των τροχων καταξίς) the mark made by wheels; so though it be taken for (*semita*,) a *path*, yet it is (*orbita*) such a path as is marked out for others, that leaves a *track* that may be followed.

Our obedience to God is called our *walking* before him, Gen. xvii, i. The first divine testimony given to any man was with respect to his faith in *sacrifice*, Gen. iv, 4; expressing the atonement to be made by Christ; and the second was to obedience under the name of *walking* with God; "Enoch walked with God," Gen. v, 24; in these two, thus exemplified from the beginning, *faith and obedience*, doth the life of God in the church consist; and every one's course of actions, with respect to God and his will, are his *paths*.

The path of our obedience may be considered, either *objectively*, denoting the will of God revealed to us; the canon or rule which we are to walk by; in which sense the path of all men is one and the same; absolutely and perfectly straight in itself; or, it may be considered *subjectively*, with respect to them that walk in it, and so there are degrees of straightness; men may *continue* in it, yet *fail* variously as to its universal rectitude. So Peter and others with him did not (*ορθοτα-*

δεν, Gal. ii, 14, *walk with a right foot*;) they continued in the *path* of gospel truth, but they *stumbled* in it, they warped in one instance from it.

§6. And hereby we may understand what is here enjoined by way of duty, *viz.* to make these paths straight. For there are two things herein;

1. That we walk *uprightly* in the paths of obedience; then are our paths *straight* when we walk *uprightly* in the paths of God. And as this respects our universal obedience; so, I doubt not, but regard is had to halting, or taking some crooked steps in profession during trial; deserting of church assemblies, forbearing of sundry necessary duties, irregular compliance with the Jews in their worship; though they utterly forsook not the path of the gospel, yet they walked not in with a *right foot*; they failed in the way, though they fell not from it; these things the apostle would have rectified.

2. That we walk *visibly* in these paths; this is included both in the signification of the original word (τροχίαι) *paths*, and in the precept, to make our paths *straight*. And this is necessary to the end of preserving others from being turned out of the way, or their recovery from their wandering.

Therefore, the duties especially intended in this precept, are courage, resolution, constancy in profession, with a diligent watch against all crooked compliances, or fearful relinquishment of duties.

§7. The enforcement of the duty required, is, "lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." He that is *lame* can make but slow progress, and is often ready by his halting to stumble out of the way. *Lameness*, therefore, is some defect that is distinguished from external hinderances, and from mere fainting or weariness, (whereof the

apostle had spoken before, and which may befall them that are not *lame*) which obstructs men in their progress, and makes them be easily turned out of the way; besides, it includes an *inward disease* in particular, whence the apostle says, it is to be *healed*.

§8. Hence *observe*;

1. Despondency and weariness are the great evils which, in all our sufferings and afflictions, we are with all attention of mind to watch against; this is the way whereby multitudes have entered into scandalous backslidings, and many into cursed apostasies. We do well to pity *others* who are weary and fainting in their courage, and under their burdens, for they have spent all their strength, and have no way of supply; but we are to be no way gentle towards *ourselves* in our spiritual weariness and decays, because we have continual supplies of strength ready for us, if we use them in a due manner, see Isa. xl, 28—31.

2. We ought to confirm our minds against all discouragements and despondencies, by the consideration of God's *design* in all our sufferings and afflictions, and the blessed success with which he will crown them.

3. The recovery of this frame, or the restoration of our spiritual "hands and knees" to their former vigor, is by stirring up all grace to its due exercise, which is torpid and desponding under this slothful frame.

4. It is our duty not only to be found in the ways of God in general, but to take care that we walk carefully, circumspectly, uprightly, and diligently in them. It is a sad thing when some men's walk in the ways of God shall deter others from them, or turn them out.

5. To make *halts* or baulks in our way of profession; or our paths being *crooked* in the neglect of duty; or dastardly compliances with the world in time of

trials and persecution, is an evidence of an evil frame of heart, and of a dangerous state and condition.

6. Sundry diseases, weaknesses, and lamenesses are apt to befall the flock of God. These he promiseth himself to be tender towards, and to *heal*, as he severally threatens those shepherds by whom they are neglected, Ezek. xxxiv, 4, &c.

§9. And the sense of these words may be included in the ensuing observations:

1. An hesitation or doubtfulness about important doctrines of truth will make men lame and weak in their profession. And,

2. Those who are so, are disposed to a total defection from the truth, and are ready on all occasions to go out of the way. Also in general,

3. Every vicious habit of mind, every defect in light or neglect of duty, every want of stirring up grace to exercise, will make men lame and halt in their profession, and easy to be turned aside by difficulties and oppositions.

4. When we see persons in such a state, it is our duty to be very careful so to behave ourselves, as not to give any occasion to their farther miscarriages, but rather endeavor their healing.

5. The best way whereby this may be done, is by making visible and plain to them our own faith, resolution, courage, and constancy, in a way of obedience becoming the gospel. Hereby we shall both excite them to, and direct them in their duty. For,

6. The negligent walking of those professors, who are sound in the faith, their weakness and pusillanimity in times of trial, and their want of making straight paths to their feet in visible holiness, is a great means of turning aside those that are lame, weak, and halting.

7. It is good to deal with, and endeavor the healing of such halters, "whilst they are yet in the way;" for when they are quite turned out, their recovery will be difficult, if not impossible.

VERSE 14.

*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

§1. Transition to a new subject. Prescription of practical duties. §2. Exposition. Our duty towards men. To follow peace with them. §3. The manner of doing it. §4. Our duty towards God. To follow holiness. §5. Observations.

§1. FROM his exhortation to patient perseverance in the profession of the gospel under *sufferings*, and afflictions, the apostle proceeds to a prescription of *practical duties*; and although they are such as are absolutely necessary in themselves at all times, yet they are here peculiarly enjoined, with respect to our constancy in professing the gospel; for no light, no knowledge of the truth, no resolution or courage will preserve any man in his profession, especially in times of trial, without a diligent attendance to the duties of holiness and gospel obedience.

§2. "Follow peace with all men." The substance of our duty towards all men, *as men*, in all circumstances and relations, is to "seek peace with them." And that we may do our duty to attain it, three things are required:—*Righteousness*; "The fruit of righteousness is peace;" to wrong no man, to give to every one his due, or to do to all men as we would have them do to us:—*Usefulness*; That we be useful to all men, in all duties of piety, charity, and beneficence, Gal. vi, 10. "As we have opportunity let us do good," be *useful*, profitable, beneficial, working that which is good towards all men; *avoiding of just of-*

*fence*; "Give none offence neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles," 1 Cor. x, 32. But, be it remarked, we must eternally bid defiance to that peace with men, which is inconsistent with the peace of God. The divine mandate runs,—“If it be possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,” Rom. xii, 18.

§3. From these difficulties ariseth the injunction of the special way and manner of seeking it (*διὰ τὴν ἐκείνην*) *earnestly follow*. It is that which will fly from us, and which we must with all earnestness pursue, or we shall not overtake it; and it is so expressed, because of the many pretences which most men use to avoid peace with those who profess the gospel. All these, “as much as in us lieth,” we are to overcome in pursuit of peace, never giving it over whilst we are in this world.

“With all men;” that is, all sorts of men, according as we stand related to them, or have occasion of conversing with them. The *worst* of men are not excepted out of this rule; not our enemies; not our persecutors; we are still, by all the ways mentioned, to “follow peace” with them all. Let this alone be fixed, that we are not obliged to any thing that is inconsistent with holiness, contrary to the word of God, adverse to the principles and light of our minds and consciences, for the obtaining of peace with any, or all the men in the world; which rule is absolute and universal. Wherefore,

§4. The other thing enjoined respects our duty towards God. “And holiness.” It refers to the *same way* of seeking it; to follow it earnestly, to pursue it by all appointed ways and means; and what is here prescribed, is *universal holiness*, “without which no man shall see the Lord.” It is all one whether we understand God absolutely, or the Lord Christ in an

especial manner by the name "Lord;" for we shall never see one without the other. Christ prays for us, that we may be where he is, to behold his glory, John xvii, 24; but this we cannot do without seeing God also, or the eternal glory of God in him. This sight of God and Christ, which is *intellectual*, not corporeal; *finite*, not absolutely comprehensive of the divine essence; is the sum of our future blessedness. And the necessity of it depends both on an eternal, unchangeable, divine *constitution*—God having enacted it, as an eternal law, that *holiness* shall be the way of attaining and coming to blessedness—and on its being a due *preparation* for it; the soul being by holiness made meet and fit to come to the sight of the Lord, Col. i, 12, 13. And therefore (*εχωρις, qua destitutus*) *without which*; of which whoever is destitute, in whom this holiness is not, he shall never see the Lord.

§5. Whence observe:

1. A frame and disposition of seeking peace with all men, by the means before laid down, is eminently suited to the doctrine and grace of the gospel. It is a great ornament to our profession, and a great comfort and support to ourselves in our sufferings. For when we have the testimony of our consciences, that we have sincerely sought peace with all men, it will not only make us rest satisfied in what they unjustly do to us; but give us a triumph over them in our minds, in that we have complied with the will of God therein.

2. They are much mistaken who hope to see Christ hereafter in glory and live and die here in an unholy state. No privilege, no gift, no church office or power, will give admission to this state.

3. If this doctrine be true, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," the case will be hard at last,



and the disappointment dreadful, with a multitude of professors, especially those popes, cardinals, and prelates, who pretend that they have the opening of the door into his presence committed to them.

4. We may follow *peace* with men, and not attain it; but if we follow *holiness*, we shall assuredly see the Lord.

5. The same means are to be used for securing our present perseverance, and our future blessedness,—"holiness."

#### VERSE 15.

*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*

§1. Connexion. §2. Explanation of the caution and warning. §3. Taken from Moses. §4. The dangerous consequence of neglecting the caution. §5, 6. Observations.

§1. **F**ROM a prescription of *necessary duties*, the apostle proceedeth to give *caution* and warning against sundry sins and evils that are contrary to them, and such as, if admitted, would prove ruinous to their profession, particularly in reference to our work and duty towards others. And the apostle would have us (*obstare principiis*) to hinder the entrance of this evil, and so effectually to prevent its progress.

§2. "Looking diligently," respects both the common charitative duty of all believers as they are called to it by occasions and circumstances, as also an especial institution of Christ, to be observed in his church. The Lord Christ hath ordained, that the members of the same church and society should mutually watch over one another, and the whole body over all the members to their mutual edification. And that the

practice of it is now so much lost, is the shame and almost the ruin of Christianity.

The first evil to be obviated by this church inspection is, "failing of the grace of God;" God's *favor* and acceptance in Christ, as proposed and declared by the gospel; all spiritual mercies and privileges in adoption, justification, sanctification, and consolation. This grace, men, under all their profession of the gospel, may *fail* of. The word (*υστερευω*) to *fail*, signifies sometimes to *want* or be *deficient* in any kind, Matt. xix, 20; sometimes to *come behind*, 1 Cor. i, 7; sometimes to be *destitute*, Heb. xi, 37; sometimes to *come short* of, as Rom. iii, 23; Heb. iv, 1; but no where signifies to *fall from*: so that the inquiries of men about *falling from grace*, as to these words, are impertinent. Wherefore, to "fail of grace," is to come short of it, not to obtain it, though we seem to be in the way thereto. So also to "fall from grace," Gal. v, 4; is, not to obtain justification by the faith of Christ.

§3. "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." All agree that the apostle hath respect to the words of Moses, Deut. xxix, 18. "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." *Gall* was a poisonous weed in the eastern countries, and the name is often applied to poisonous and destructive sins, Amos vi, 12; Deut. xxxii, 32.

Now it is evident that in the words of Moses, persons inclining to *apostasy* and departure from God are intended. So the foregoing words make it manifest; "Lest there should be among you a man or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations;" that is, lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall or wormwood; be it one or more, man or woman, family, or tribe, that is thus affected,

it is a root of bitterness among you. Hence it is evident the apostle intendeth not any evil in the abstract, any heresy or sin; but *persons* guilty of this evil, whose hearts are inclined to apostasy from the gospel, either into Judaism, or sensuality of life.

It may be called a "*root*," because the beginning of it is *hidden* in the hearts of men, where it cannot be discovered; and because from this *evil heart* of unbelief, the whole evil of apostasy proceeds, as fruit upon its proper root. And it is called a "*root of bitterness*," because of its poisonous qualities. Generally when men's hearts are inclined to apostasy, they conceal it for a season like a root in the earth; but as they have opportunity they begin to discover what is within; commonly by the neglect of the church assemblies and duties, chap. x, 24, 25. Thence they proceed to *perverse disputings*, and contention against the truth, 1 Tim. vi, 5; and so go on to manifest themselves in *practices*, as occasions are administered. This "*root*" will not always lie covered this evil heart will *manifest* itself; which is the "*springing up*" here intended.

(Ενοχλη) "*trouble you*," by bringing things into disorder, tumult and confusion. A trouble of *sorrow* and grief for the sin and eternal ruin of those who have been united with them in the same gospel society. When those in whom this root is, are either *confident* or *numerous*, they will *trouble* the church, disorder it, and cast things into confusion, by wrangling disputes, speaking perverse things, endeavoring to draw disciples to corrupt and deceive, as is the manner of all apostates. They also "*trouble*" the church by bringing an *evil report* upon it for divisions, contentions, and instability.

§4. "And thereby many be defiled;" *thereby*, by this root so springing up and bearing this fruit of trouble.

A dangerous thing it is to have such things fall out in churches, that there be amongst them a man or woman, few or more, than on any pretences incline to a departure from the truth of the gospel. It seldom stops with themselves. Through ignorance, negligence, darkness, but especially the want of experiencing the power of gospel truth, professors are easily imposed on by them, and thereby many are *defiled*.

There is no impropriety in saying they are *defiled* by a "root springing up;" for the apostle doth not speak of the *manner* of its operation, but of the effect it produceth; and this is, that men who have been cleansed by baptism, and the profession of the truth, should be again contaminated with abominable errors, or filthy lusts, 2 Pet. ii, 18—22.

§5. Observe hence,

1. The grace, love, and good will of God, in the adoption, justification, sanctification, and glorification of believers is proposed to all in the gospel, as what may be infallibly attained in the due use of appointed means—sincere faith in Christ Jesus.

2. The outward profession of the gospel, and the enjoyment of its privileges, will not *of themselves* instate any man in the grace of God, or an assured interest therein.

3. There is no man, who, under the profession of the gospel comes short of obtaining the grace and favor of God, but it is by reason of his own sin. The proposal of it, on the terms expressed in the gospel, is *sure*, and none shall ever fail of it, who embrace it on these terms. This is included in the word which hath a charge on it, of a sinful deficiency in seeking after this grace.

4. Negligence and sloth, missing of opportunities, and love of sin, all proceeding from unbelief, are the

only causes why men under profession of the gospel, do fall of the grace of God.

§6. Farther *observe*,

1. That the *root* of apostasy from God and the profession of the gospel may abide *invisibly* in professing churches.

2. Spiritual evils in churches are progressive. From small and imperceptible beginnings, they will grow and increase to the worst of evils, 2 Tim. ii, 16, 17.

3. It is the duty of churches, what in them lies, to prevent their own trouble, as well as the ruin of others.

4. There is a latent disposition in negligent professors to receive infection by spiritual defilements, if they are not watched against. "Many will be defiled."

5. That church inspection is a blessed ordinance and duty, which is designed by Christ himself, as a means to prevent these contagious evils in churches.

VERSES 16, 17.

*Lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; for ye know that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

§1. Introduction. §2. (L.) Words explained. Fornication. §3. Profaneness. Esau. §4. His birthright. §5. How he sold it. §6. Found no place for repentance. §7. But was rejected. Why? §8, 9. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle proceeds to give other instances of evils, whereby Christian societies would be corrupted, and way made for total apostasy which were to be diligently heeded, and carefully watched against.

He puts together *fornication* and *profaneness*; because they usually go together. Fornicators, that is, those who are habitually so, always grow profane; and profane persons, of all others, are apt to set light by fornication. These things are written with the beams of the sun, in the days wherein we live. Few

fornicators or profane persons do ever come to repentance.

§2. (I.) "That there be no fornicator;" reference is had to the former charge; "look you to it diligently," that there be no fornicator in your society. Take care that no persons fall into that sin; or if they do, let them be removed from among you. The *sin* is evil to *them*, but the *communion* is evil to *you*. This sin is most directly and particularly opposite to that *holiness*, which he is exhorting them to, as that without which they shall not see the Lord.

Under this name of *fornicator*, all sins of the same kind are intended. For the scripture calls all conjunction with women not in lawful marriage by the name of "fornication," 1Cor. v, 8—10. It is therefore general, as to all who are so guilty of uncleanness, as to come under this denomination, without any supposed restriction to the *Gentiles*.

There is no sort of sinners that would be so *scandalous* to churches, should they be tolerated in them, as *fornicators*. And therefore the Pagans endeavored with their utmost malice and false accusations, to fasten the charge of adulteries, incests, promiscuous lusts, and uncleanness, on Christians in their assemblies. For they knew full well, that let them pretend what else they pleased, if they could fix this stain upon them, they would be the common hatred and scorn of mankind. For the higher men's pretences are to God and religion, if they should issue in such vile lusts, they are the more contemptible, and the more to be abhorred.

§3. The second evil to be watched against its *profaneness*; or that there be no "*profane person*" among them. For it is *persons* that are strictly intended, as is evident in the instance of Esau. To be profane,

may be taken either, *passively* or *actively*:—in the *first* sense, it is a person or place separated and cast out from the society of things sacred. So holy things are said to be profaned, when men take off the veneration that is due to them, and expose them to common use or contempt. A profane person, *actively*, is one that despiseth, sets light by, or contemneth sacred things. Such as mock at religion, or who lightly regard its promises or threatenings; who despise or neglect God's worship, who speak irreverently of its concerns, we deservedly call *profane* persons, and such the world is filled with at this day.

This profaneness is the last step of entrance into final apostasy. When men from professors of religion become despisers of, and scoffers at it, their state is dangerous, if not irrecoverable.

"As Esau." There are very few in scripture, concerning whom more evidences are given of their being reprobates. And this should warn all men not to trust to the outward privileges of the church. He was the first born of Isaac, circumcised according to the law of that ordinance, and partaker in all the worship of God in that holy family; yet an outcast from the covenant.

§4. "Who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right." Many expositors in the consideration of the sin of Esau, Gen. xxv, 30—34; reflect on many crimes in him, especially *intemperance* and *gluttony*; but, as far as I can see, without cause. This desire of food from his own brother, when he was hungry and faint, might be harmless; but his "*profaneness*" acted itself in a readiness to part with his *birthright*, with whatsoever was contained in it and annexed to it. And whereas, as we shall see, this had something in it that was sacred, the *undervaluing* of it was an high

instance of profaneness. He sold (*τα πρωτογονια αυτου* *suum jus primogeniti: Bez.*) *his right of the first-born; (jus primogenituræ suæ)* the right of *his own primogeniture*; the things belonging to him as the first-born. I shall not with some admit the *priesthood* among the privileges of the birthright, and can give arguments sufficient to disprove it; but this is not a place to insist on these things. A *double portion* of the paternal inheritance appertain to the first-born by the law, Deut. xxi, 17.

There was also in it a right of *rule and government* over the rest of the children of the family, which was transferred to Judah on the forfeiture made by Reuben, 1 Chron. v, 2; and, therefore, when Isaac had transferred the birthright and blessing to Jacob, he tells Esau, "I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given unto him for servants," Gen. xxvii, 37. But, moreover, there was a *blessing* that from Abraham ran in the patriarchal line, which was communicated from father to son, containing an inclosure of all church privileges, and the preservation of the promised seed. This, I confess, was distinct from the birthright, Gen. xxvii, 36. But although it were not annexed *inseparably* to the birthright, yet there was a just expectation that it should be conveyed according to the primogeniture. Hence, not only Esau calls it *his blessing*, "he hath taken away my blessing," ver. 36, but Isaac calls it so too; "he hath taken away *thy blessing*," ver. 35. It was not his by divine destination, as appeared, in the issue; nor had he made it his by obtaining a special interest in the promise by faith; for he had it not. But in the ordinary course it was to be his, and so in his own expectation; but God cut off the line of succession herein, and gave it to Jacob. Now as Jacob in his whole design aimed not at riches and power, wherein



he was contented to see his brother far exceed him; but at an inheritance of the *patriarchal blessing*, wherein the promised seed and the church state were contained, whereunto the birthright was an outward entrance, a sign and a pledge of it; so Esau, by selling his birthright, did virtually renounce his right to the blessing, which he thought to be annexed thereto.

§3. But it may be inquired how he *sold* his birthright, or how he could sell what was not in his own power? The word is (*αρεδolo*) he *gave away*, or he gave up. But whereas he did it for what he esteemed a valuable consideration, and made an express bargain, the sense intended in the word is, that he *sold* it, Gen. xxv, 33. And although he never sought the recovery of the *birthright*, the renunciation of which he had confirmed by an oath, yet he hoped he might retain the *blessing* still.

It is evident how in all his actions he carried it profanely; for he discovered a great readiness to part with his birthright, and all that was annexed to it by divine institution. Being a man wholly given to his pleasures, and the love of present things, he seems scarce ever to have entertained serious thoughts, about what it was significant of, in things spiritual and heavenly. He did it on so slight an occasion, and valued it at so small a rate, as "one mess of *pottage*," or "one morsel of *meat*," that is, what was to be eaten. Regardless of what he had done, after the power of his present temptation was over, it is said, "he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way," as a man utterly unconcerned in what he had done; whereon the Holy Ghost adds that censure. "Thus Esau despised his birthright; he did not only *sell* it, but *despised* it," Gen. xxv, 31—34. This was the "profaneness" of Esau.

§6. "For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing." There is a peculiar

force of persuasion and conviction, when we argue from men's own knowledge and concessions. *You know* this yourselves; you know it full well from the scripture, and therefore let it be of great weight and consideration with you. Esau is represented as a man under great amazement, as if he had little thought to fall into such a condition. And thus at one time or other it will fall out with all profane persons, who have refused the mercy and privileges of the gospel; they shall at one time or other fall under dreadful surprisals. Then shall they see the horror of those crimes, which before they made nothing of. "*How that afterwards.*" This *afterwards* was not less, perhaps, than forty or fifty years; for he sold his birthright when he was young; now when he designed the recovery of the blessing, Isaac was about an hundred and forty years; so long did he live in his sin, without any sense of it or repentance for it. Things went prosperously with him in the world, and he had no regard in the least of what he had done, nor of what would be the end of it. But falling now into a new distress, it fills him with perplexity; and so it is with all secure sinners whilst things go prosperously with them, they can continue without remorse; but at one time or other their iniquity will find them out.

(Θελον κληρονομησαι την ευλογιαν) *he would have inherited the blessing.* He esteemed himself the presumptive heir of the patriarchal blessing, and knew not that he had virtually renounced it, and meritoriously lost it, by selling his birthright. So the apostle here distinguisheth between the birthright and the blessing. He sold his birthright, but would have inherited the blessing; and herein he was a type of the unbelieving Jews at that time; for they adhered to the outward things of the blessing, the carcass of it, to the rejection of him who was the whole life, soul and power of

it. *Note*; It is not unusual, that men should earnestly desire the outward privileges of the church, who value not the inward grace and power of them; but they are profane persons.

§7. The event of this attempt was, that he was rejected. Not that his *eternal reprobation* is hereby intended, but this open, solemn rejection of him from the covenant of God, and the blessings thereof, was an evidence of his being reprobated; whence he is considered as the type of reprobates, Rom. ix, 11, 12. The refusal of his father to give him the patriarchal blessing is here intended. It is all one whether we refer (*αὐτῷ*) it, in the close of the verse, to the remote antecedent the *blessing*, or to the next, which is *repentance*. For that which he *sought*, even in repentance, (namely, the repentance of his father, or the change of his mind) was the *blessing* also. For it is now generally agreed by all, that there is nothing in the words, which should in the least intimate, that he *sought of God* the grace of repentance; nor is there any thing in the record that looks that way. And I shall rather interpret this word with Beza of the *blessing*, than of the repentance even of Isaac; because his cry was immediately and directly for the former. The manner how he sought the blessing, is, that he did it *diligently with tears*. So the apostle expresseth the record, Gen. xxvii, 38.

1. He did it when it was *too late*; for he had not only forfeited his right to it long before, and lived in impenitency under that forfeiture, but the sacred investiture of another in that blessing was solemnly past, which could not be recalled.

2. He sought not at all in a *due manner*. Outward vehemency in expressions and tears may be influenced by such considerations as are not an evidence of in-

ward sincerity. He sought it not of God, but only of him who was the minister of it. There are no bounds put to the infinite treasures of divine goodness, if application be made in a due manner. But he sought the end without the means; he would have the blessing, but used not the means for attaining it,—faith and repentance. For, notwithstanding all his sorrow and trouble, upon his disappointment he immediately resolved, as Cain in the like case, to kill his brother.

§8. From the promises observe the ensuing particulars:

1. That church which tolerates in its communion men living in such gross sins, as fornication, &c. is utterly departed from the rule of the gospel. And it is also hence evident,

2. That apostatising professors are prone to sins of uncleanness; for being overcome of the flesh, and brought into bondage, as 2 Pet. ii, 19; they are slaves and debtors to it, to serve it in the lusts of uncleanness.

3. Evil examples proposed in scripture light, laid open in their roots and courses, are efficacious warnings to believers to abstain from all occasions leading to the like evils. Take warning from Esau.

4. When there is in any a latent predominant principle of profaneness, a sudden temptation or trial will let it out to the greatest evils. Thus it was with Esau; and we see it daily verified to amazement.

5. This principle of profaneness, in preferring the morsels of the world before the birthright privileges of the church, is what at this day threatens the present ruin of religion.

Let men pretend what they please, it is from a spirit of *profaneness* that they forsake the privileges and assemblies of the church for any outward advantages; and what will be their success, we shall see in the next verse.

§9. Again observe;

1. This example of Esau cuts off all hopes by outward privileges, when there is an inward profaneness of heart. He had as much to plead for the blessing, and as fair a probability for attaining it, as ever any profane hypocrite can have in this world. And,

2. Profane apostates have a limited season only, wherein the recovery of the blessing is possible. For although here be no intimation of a man seeking repentance from God in a due manner and being rejected, which is contrary to the revealed nature of God, who is a rewarder of all who diligently seek him; yet here is an indication of severity, in leaving men, guilty of such provocations, in an irrecoverable condition, even in this life.

3. The severity of God in dealing with apostates is a blessed ordinance for the preservation of believers, and the edification of the whole church, Rom. xi, 22.

4. Sin may be the *occasion* of great sorrow, where there is no sorrow *for* sin; as with Esau. Men may rue that in its consequences which yet they like well enough in its causes.

5. No man knows to what event a deliberate sin may lead him. Esau little thought, when he sold his birthright, that he had utterly forfeited the eternal blessing.

6. Profaneness, the despising of spiritual privileges, is a sin that God will, at one time or other, testify his severity against; yea, this, on many accounts, is the proper object of God's severity. It shall not be spared in the eldest son, and most dearly beloved of an Isaac.

7. Steadfastness in faith, with submission to the will of God, will establish the soul in those duties which are most irksome to flesh and blood. Nothing could

prevail with Isaac to change his mind, when he knew what was the will of God.

VERSES 18, 19.

*For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.*

§1. Some general considerations premised. §2, 3. (I.) Exposition. Not come to the mount that might be touched. §4. The fire that burned. §5. Blackness. §6. Darkness and tempest. §7 The sound of a trumpet. §8. The voice of words. §9. The request of the hearers. §10, 11. (II.) Observations.

§1. **THIS** discourse, from hence to the end of the chapter, is of great weight, and accompanied with sundry difficulties; which expositors do scarcely so much as notice. I shall, therefore, premise those *general considerations* which will direct us in its exposition, taken from the scope of the words, and nature of the argument in hand. And,

1. The whole epistle, as we have often observed, is as to the kind of writing, *parenetic*; intended as a persuasive to constancy and perseverance in the profession of the gospel.

2. The main argument which he insists on in general to this end, and wherein the *didactical* part of the epistle doth consist, is the excellency, glory, and advantage of that gospel state to which they were called.

3. Having insisted particularly and distinctly on these things, and brought his argument from them to an issue, he makes, in the discourse before us, a *recapitulation* of the whole; for he makes a brief *scheme* of the two states of the law and gospel which he had compared, balancing the one against the other, and thereby demonstrates the force of his argument and exhortation.

4. It must be observed, that the great honor and privilege of the Judaical church state, and whereon all particular advantages depended, was their coming to mount Sinai at the giving of the law. *There* were they taken into covenant with God, to be his peculiar people above all the world; *there* were they formed into a national church; and *there* had they all the privileges of divine worship committed to them.

5. Wherefore the apostle, allowing all this, observes, that it was done in such a way of dread and terror, as that there was no evidence in all that was done of God's being reconciled to them by those things. The whole representation of him was as an *absolute sovereign*, and a *severe judge*. Thunders, voices, earthquakes, and fire, give no signification of grace and mercy; but rather bespeak a "glorious ministration of death," 2 Cor. iii, 7; whence the consciences of sinners were forced to subscribe to their own condemnation as just and equal. God was here represented in all outward demonstrations of infinite holiness, justice, severity, and terrible majesty; on the one hand; and, on the other, men in their lowest condition of sin, misery, guilt, and death. If there be not therefore something else to interpose between God and men, somewhat to fill up the space between infinite severity and inexpressible guilt; all this glorious preparation was but a theatre set up for pronouncing judgment, and the sentence of eternal condemnation against sinners. On this consideration depends the force of the apostle's argument, and the due apprehension and consideration of it is a better exposition of verses 18—21, than the mere opening of the particular expressions will amount to; yet they also must be explained.

§2. (I.) "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched." *Ye are not come*; two things are

included in this negative expression: what their *fathers* did, *they came* to the things here mentioned; and—what *they were delivered* from, by their call to the gospel. They were no more concerned in all that dread and terror.

The apostle in this *comparison* between their "*coming*" of old into the legal church state, and our *admission* into the gospel state, includes a supposition of the way and manner whereby they approached to God in the giving of the law, *viz.* by the sanctification of themselves, the washing of their clothes, as an outward sign thereof, with other reverential preparations; Exod. xix, 10; 11. Whence it will follow, that, the gospel church state being so much more excellent than that of old, God himself being in it in a more glorious and excellent manner; we ought to endeavor a more eminent sanctification and preparation, in all our approaches to God therein, ver. 28. We may also observe some things in general concerning the appearance of the *divine Majesty*, which intimates the glory and terror of it. As,

1. It was on the top of a high mountain, not on a plain. As this had a great appearance of the throne of majesty, so, it being above the people, as it were over them, it was meet to fill them with dread and fear; they looked up and saw the mountain above them full of fire and smoke; the whole mount quaking greatly, thunders and terrible voices being heard in the air, Exod. xix, 18; and xx, 18: Deut. iv, 11; they could have no other thoughts hereon, but that it was a *fearful thing* to come to judgment before the holy Lord God. And one view of that terror of the Lord's holiness and severity here represented, is enough to make the stoutest sinner quake and tremble.

2. To increase the reverence due to this appearance,



the people were commanded to keep their distance, and were straightly forbidden an approach beyond the bounds fixed and prescribed to them.

§3. They came (ὑπελαβόμενοι οὐρα) "unto the *mount that might be touched*;" mount Sinai in Arabia, Gal. iv, 25. He makes this observation to manifest how *inferior* the giving of the law was, in comparison of the promulgation of the gospel, which was from *heaven*; and to intimate the fear and bondage the people were then in, who might not so much as *touch* the mountain, on which were the signs of God's presence, though it was in itself a thing exposed to the sense of all creatures. And there is much of divine wisdom observable in the choice of this place for the giving of the law. For,

1. It was a place of absolute *solitude*; here the people could neither see nor hear any thing, as it were, but God and themselves: there was no appearance of any relief, no place of retreat; but there they must abide the will of God. And this teacheth us, that when God deals with men by the law, he will let them see nothing but *himself*, and their own *consciences*. He takes them out of their wonted reliefs, and prevents all reserves and retreats. For the most part, when the law is preached to sinners, they have innumerable diversions and reliefs at hand to shield themselves from its terror and efficacy. They betake themselves to the promises of sin itself, or the purposes of future amendment; or else the various occupations of life; they have other things to do than to attend to so unwelcome a voice, at least it is not *yet* necessary. But when God will bring them to the mount, all these pretences will vanish and disappear; not one of them shall be able to suggest the least relief to a poor guilty sinner; his conscience shall be kept to that which he

can neither abide nor avoid. Unless he can make the great plea of an interest in the blood of Christ, he is gone for ever. To this we may add, that God gave herein a type and representation of the *great judgment* at the last day: the terror of it consists much in this, that sinners shall be able to see nothing but God and the tokens of his wrath.

2. It was a barren and *fruitless desert*, where there was neither water nor food; and answerable thereto the law, in a state of sin, would bring forth no fruit, nothing acceptable to God, nor useful to men; for there was nothing on *Sinai*, but bushes and brambles; whence it had its name. These made an appearance at a distance of some fruitfulness, but when it came to be tried, there was nothing but what was fit for the fire. And so it is with all under the law, they may seem to perform many duties of obedience; yea, such as they trust to, and make their boast of. But when they are brought to the trial, they are no other but such as God speaks of, Isa. xxvii, 4, "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." Other fruit the law will not bring forth. Nor was there any *water* in the desert of Horeb to make it fruitful; that which the people lived on was brought out of the *rock*; and "that rock was Christ."

§4. "The fire that burned;" for so I rather read the words, than the mount which "burned with fire." For the fire of itself was a token of God's presence, and a *distinct* means of filling the people with dread; Exod. xix, 18, "The Lord descended on the mount in fire;" and Deut. iv, 12, "God spake out of the midst of the fire." And this fire presented both—the *descent* of God on the mount; "The Lord came down in fire," the people thus seeing the *token* of God's presence;

and—the ~~continuance~~ of his presence there, for it continued burning all the time God spoke; “he spake out of the fire.” And it was a flaming fire, which raised a smoke, “like the smoke of a furnace,” Exod. xix, 18; which our apostle seems to express by “blackness,” in the next word. Yea, this fire flamed and burned up, as it were, “to the midst of heaven,” Deut. iv, 11. It signifies his *jealousy*; for so Moses expounded it; Deut. iv, 24, “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, even a *jealous* God.”

This is the first thing the people beheld when they came to the mount. And when men under the law have to deal with God, their first apprehension of him is his holiness and severity against sinners, with his anger and displeasure against sin. There the law leaves them, and thence they must be consumed, without relief by Jesus Christ. Until the law comes, they are *alive*; that is, at peace, and in security, well satisfied with their condition. They see not, they think not of the *fire* that is ready to consume them; yea, for the most part, they have quite other notions of God, Psal. i, 21. But when the law hath by its convictions brought the sinner to a sense of guilt which he cannot avoid, it represents to him the holiness and severity of God, with his indignation and wrath against sin, which have a resemblance of a *consuming fire*. This fills his heart with dread and terror, and makes him see and bewail his miserable undone condition, in the presence of infinite holiness, inexorable justice, and fiery indignation. Hence the cry of those who find not the way of relief will be one day, “Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who shall inhabit everlasting burning?”

§5. To “fire” the apostle adds “*blackness*,” as we render the word, attended with “darkness and tem-

pest," Deut v, 22—24. "God spake to you out of the midst of the fire, and the cloud, and the thick darkness," ver 22. So that it is evident there was a mixture of them altogether, Psalm xviii, 8—13. And nothing can be conceived of greater dread and terror, than such a mixture of fire, and darkness, and tempest, which left nothing of light to the fire but its dread and terror.\*

(Γνοφος) *blackness*, saith Eustathius, is from (νεφος *Æol.* νοφος) *a cloud*, in the *Æolic dialect*. Wherefore the apostle in this word might have respect to that "blackness," which was caused by the thick cloud wherein God descended; Exod xix, 9, "I will come to thee in a *"thick cloud;"* which abode upon the mount, ver. 16; the *blackness* of it not being taken away by the fire that was in it, every part of the appearance reserving its own terror. But the *Syriac* and *Arabic*, with other translations, put the words in construction, and render them, *the blackness* or *obscurity of the cloud;*" which probably is intended in this word and the following.

And this is the *third* thing in the progress of the work of the law on the consciences of sinners; when they are shut up under guilt, and begin to be terrified with the representation of God's severity against sin, they cannot but look to see if there be any thing in the manifestation of God and his will by the law that will yield them relief; but here they find all things covered with *blackness* and *obscurity*; the glory of

\*Thus Milton could conceive of nothing more dreadful, when describing the "place eternal justice had prepared" for the rebellious, than the following;

Yet from those flames

No light, but rather darkness visible

Served only to discover sights of woe,

Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace

And rest can never dwell.-----

Parad. Lost, Book I line 62.

God, and his design of bringing them to the law, or the law to them, is covered under the veil of this darkness which increaseth their dread.

§6. To this blackness the apostle adds "*darkness and tempest*;" blackness is a property of a thing in itself; *darkness*, is its effect towards others; what this darkness was we cannot well comprehend; but this it teaches us, that notwithstanding the revelation God made of himself in this dispensation of the law, he was, as to his glorious purposes of grace and mercy, in *thick darkness* to the people.

"*And tempest*;" in this word he compriseth the thundering, lightning, and earthquake; Exod. xix, 16; xx, 18; the increased the terror of the darkness, and made it (<sup>7777</sup>) a *thick darkness*, as it is in Moses.

As it was *without* in the giving of the law, so it is *within* in the work of the law; it fills the mind of men with a storm, accompanied with darkness and perplexity. First, its work in the minds and consciences of sinners ends in darkness and tempest; it brings the soul to *darkness*, that it knows not what to do, nor how to take one step towards its own relief; it can see no light, either for its direction, or consolation; and herein it either tires itself with vain endeavors for relief, by its own works and duties; or else sinks into heartless despondencies and complaints. And, secondly, it raiseth a *tempest* of disquieting and perplexing thoughts; oftentimes accompanied with dread and terror. In this state the law leaves poor sinners, it will not accompany them one step towards deliverance; it will neither reveal, nor encourage them to look after any relief; yea, it declares that here the sinner must die and perish, for any thing the law can do. This therefore is the place and season wherein Christ interposeth, and cries to sinners, "Behold me, behold me!"

§7. They came to "the sound of a trumpet." This is called (שָׁמַע קוֹל) *the voice of the trumpet*, Exod. xix, 16.—19; and was of distinguished use in that solemnity; it is well rendered by the apostle, "the *sound* of a trumpet;" for it was not a *real* trumpet, but formed in the air by the ministry of angels, to a degree of terror; so it "waxed louder and louder," to signify the nearer approach of God.

As to its typical signification—it was a pledge of the future *judgment*, when all flesh shall be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ, to answer the terms of the law; and—as it was changed in the following institution of the feast of expiation; and in the year of jubilee—it was a type of the promulgation of the *gospel* in the ministry of Christ himself; and thus are things stated in the consciences of sinners, with respect to the different sounds of the trumpet; the summons of the law fills them with dread and terror; appear they must before God, there is no avoidance; but stand before him they cannot; they are like Adam, when he could no longer hide himself, but must appear and answer for his transgression; they have no refuge to betake themselves to; the law condemns them, they condemn themselves; and God is represented as a judge full of severity; and in this dreadful summons of the law, the gospel finds us; which exceedingly exalts the glory of sovereign grace, and of the blood of Christ in the consciences of believers, Rom. iii, 19—25.

§8. Hereunto is added "the voice of words." It is said that God spake by a "*voice*," Exod. xix, 19; that is, an *articulate voice*, in the language of the people, that it might be understood by all; and hence he is said to *speak with* the people, chap. xx, 19. "The Lord spake to them out of the midst of the fire, and

and they heard his voice," Deut. iv, 12; v, 23. Now the words that were uttered with a voice, were the *ten words*; or ten commandments, written afterwards in two tables of stone, but no more, which all the people heard, Deut. v, 22.

Wherefore from the midst of the dreadful appearance of fire, clouds, and darkness (all other noises of thunder and the trumpet ceasing) God caused a voice, speaking the words of the ten commandments, articulately in their own language, to be heard by the whole congregation, men, women, and children, in the station wherein they were placed at the foot of the mount; and this voice was so great and terrible, as that the people were not able to bear it; for although it is evident, that they were terrified with the dreadful appearances on the mount; yet was it *this speaking* of God himself that utterly overwhelmed them.

§9. "Which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more." *They that heard*; that is, the whole assembly or congregation; of all which, those that were above the age of twenty years, and so able to understand the matter and personally engage in the covenant, except two persons, died in the wilderness under the displeasure of God; "Entreated that the word should not be *spoken* to them any more; or, that the *speech* of God, should not be continued to them *immediately*." The word (*παρητησαντες*) here rendered "entreated," we express by *refusing*, ver. 25; they *deprecat*ed the hearing of the word in that manner any more; which they did no doubt by their officers and elders; for both themselves being terrified, and observing the dread of the whole congregation, they made request for themselves and the rest to Moses; and because they did it with a good

intention, out of reverence for the majesty of God, without any design of declining obedience, it was accepted, Deut. v, 28, 29.

§10. (II.) Hence we may observe;

1. A view of God as a judge, represented in fire and blackness, will fill the souls of convinced sinners with dread and terror; how secure soever they may be at present, when God calls them forth to the mount their hearts cannot endure, nor can their hands be strong.

2. When God calls sinners to answer the law, there is no avoiding of an appearance; the terrible summons and citation will draw them out, whether they will or no.

3. It is a blessed change to be removed from the summons of the law, to the invitation of the gospel; and from the guilt of sin to mercy and pardon; he that shall compare the terrible citation of sinners before the throne of God, to receive and answer the law; with those sweet, gracious, heavenly invitations, with proclamations of grace and mercy, given by Christ in the gospel, Matt. xi, 27, 28; may apprehend the difference of the two states here insisted on.

4. Let no man ever hope to appear before God with confidence or peace, unless he can have an answer in readiness for all the words of this law; and they who suppose they have any other answer, but the substitution of the surety of the covenant in our stead, with an interest by faith in his meditation, blood, and sacrifice, will be eternally deceived.

§11. Observe moreover;

1. No outward privilege, such as this was, to hear the voice of God is sufficient of itself to preserve men from such rebellion and sinful provocation as shall render them obnoxious to divine displeasure.

2. Then is the sinner utterly overwhelmed, when



he hath a sense of the *voice of God* himself in the law; when he finds God himself speaking to his conscience, he can no longer bear it.

3. That the speaking of the law immediately discovers the invincible necessity of a mediator between God and sinners. The people quickly found that there was no dealing with God in their own persons, and therefore desired that there might be one to mediate between God and them. And,

4. If the giving of the law was so full of terrors, that the people could not bear it, but apprehended they must die if God continued to speak it to them; what will be the *execution* of its curse in a way of vengeance at the last day!

#### VERSES 20, 21.

*For they could not endure that which was commanded; and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.*

§1. Introduction. §2. The terror of the law illustrated from the interdiction about touching the mountain. §3: Farther illustrated from the consternation of Moses. §4. Observation.

§1. “**F**or they could not endure *that which was commanded*,” that is, the law itself; they could not endure it; they could not bear it, or stand under it; there was administered with it a spirit of bondage to fear, Rom. viii, 15; which aggravated the terror of it in their consciences.

These are the *effects* which a due apprehension of the nature, end, and use of the law, which the severity of God therein, will produce in the minds and consciences of sinners. Thus far the law will bring us; and here it leaves us; here are we shut up; there is no avoiding of its power, sentence, and sanction; it is given

by God himself; the sinner could wish that he might never hear more of it; what is past against this law, cannot be answered for; what is to come cannot be complied with; hereon they find themselves utterly lost, and so have no expectation but of fiery indignation to consume them; and accordingly they must eternally perish, if they betake not themselves to the only relief, Christ the Savior.

§2. Of this terror from the giving of the law, and the causes of it, the apostle gives a double illustration; the first whereof is the *interdict* given against touching the mount; which extended to the very beasts; "And if so much as a beast touch the mountain;" so was the divine constitution; "whether it be beast or man, it shall not live," Exod. xix, 13; I doubt not but that Divine Providence removed from it such brute creatures as were not under the power of men, such as might be wild about those mountainous deserts, or else the fire consumed them to the least creeping thing; but the *prohibition* respects the *cattle of the people*, which were under their power, and at their disposal; and this (besides being an illustration of the absolute inaccessibleness of God by the law) seems to intimate the *uncleanness* of all things which sinners possess, by their *relation* to them. To the impure all things are impure and defiled; therefore doth the prohibition extend itself to the beasts also.

The punishment of a beast touching the mount, was, that it should *die*; and it is expressed in the prohibition, that *no hand* should touch that which had offended; it was to be slain at a distance with stones or darts; no hand was ever more to touch it; either, to *relieve* it, which may be the sense of the word; or to *slay* it, lest it were defiled thereby; and this also sheweth, at what a distance we ought to keep ourselves from every thing that falls under the curse of the law.

§3. The second evidence which he gives of the dreadful promulgation of the law, and consequently of the miserable state of them that are under its power, is on what befell Moses on this occasion; the effect of this terror extendeth itself to the meanest of beasts, and to the best of men; Moses was a person holy, and abounding in grace above all others of his time; the meekest man on the earth; he was accustomed to divine revelations, and had once before beheld a representation of the Divine presence Exod. iii; he was the *internuntius*, the mediatory messenger, between God and the people at that time; yet would none of these privileges exempt him from an amazing sense of the terror of the Lord in giving the law; and if on all these advantages he could not bear it, much less can any other man do so; the Mediator himself of the old covenant was not able to sustain the dread and terror of the law; how desperate then are their hopes who would yet be saved by Moses!

This expression was, "I exceedingly fear and quake," or tremble; that he said so, we are assured by the Holy Ghost in this place; they were undoubtedly spoken then and there (though not recorded in the sacred story,) hence it is said, that *he spake*, but not one word is added of *what* he did speak; Exod. xix, 19, "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake and God answered him by a voice;" then no doubt he spoke these words; for it was immediately upon his sight of the dreadful appearance, to which season the apostle assigns them.

It is said, moreover, that God answered him with a voice; but what he said to him is not recorded. Doubtless, God spoke what gave him relief, which

delivered him out of his distress, and reduced him to a frame of mind meet for the ministration committed to him, which in his surprisal and consternation he was not; and therefore immediately afterwards, when the people fell into their great horror and distress, he was able to relieve and comfort them, no doubt, with that kind of relief which he himself had received from God, Exod. xx, 20. It appears then that,

§4. *Obs.* All persons concerned were brought to an utter distress by the renovation and giving of the law, from whence no relief is to be obtained but by him alone who is the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe.

VERSES 22—24.

*But you are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

§1. The state of the church under the gospel. A rule of interpretation. §2. (1.) Believers are come to mount Sion. §3, 4. The city of the living God. §5. The company of angels. §6. Inferences. §7. The general assembly and church, §8. (Of the first-born, written in heaven. §9. To God the Judge of all. 10. To the spirits of just men made perfect. 11. To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. §12. The blood of sprinkling. §13. That speaketh better things than Abel's. §14. How we come to these things. §15—17. (II.) Observations.

§1. **T**HIS is the second part of the comparison. In the *former* he gave an account of the state of the people and the church under the *law*, from the giving of it, and the nature of its commands. In *this* he so declares the state to which they were called by the gospel, as to manifest it to be incomparably more excellent in itself, and beneficial to them.

We have here a blessed, a glorious description of the *Catholic church*, as the nature and communion of

it is revealed under the gospel; which is distributed into two parts—*militant* and *triumphant*. There is in the religion of the papists *another* part of the church, niether in earth nor in heaven, but *under* the earth, as they say, in purgatory. But with *this*, they who come to Christ by the gospel have nothing to do. They come indeed to the “spirits of just men made perfect;” but so are none of those, by their own confession, who are in *purgatory*. Wherefore believers have nothing to do with them.

That which we must respect as our *rule* in the exposition of the whole is, that the apostle intends a description of that state whereunto believers are called by the gospel. For it is that alone which he opposeth to the state of the church under the Old Testament. And to suppose that it is the *heavenly future state* which he intends, is utterly to destroy the force of his argument and exhortation. For they are built solely on the pre-eminence of the gospel state, above that under the law, and not of heaven itself, which none could question.

§2. (I.) And first we are said to “come to mount *Sion*.” The sum of the whole is, that by the gospel we are called to a participation of all the glory which was ascribed or promised to the church under those names, in opposition to what the people received by the law at mount *Sinai*.

*Sion* was a mount in Jerusalem, which had two heads, one whereof was called Moriah, whereon the temple was built, whereby it became the seat of all the solemn worship of God; and on the other was the place and habitation of the kings of the house of David; both of them typical of Christ, the one in his *priestly*, the other in his *kingly* office.

And the opposition between these two mountains was eminent. For God came down for a *season* only

on mount Sinai; but in Sion he is said to *dwell*, and to make it his habitation for ever. He appeared in *terror* on mount Sinai, as we have seen; but Sion was in Jerusalem, which is a "vision of *peace*." He gave the *law* on mount Sinai; the *gospel* went forth from Sion, Isa. ii, 2, 3. He utterly forsook Sinai, and left it under *bondage*; but Sion is *free* for ever, Gal. iv. The people were burthened with the law at mount Sinai, with which burden they were led to Sion, where they waited for deliverance from it, in the observations of those institutions of divine worship which were typical and significant thereof.

Sion therefore is the place of God's special gracious residence, the throne of Christ in his reign, the subject of all graces, the object of all promises, as the scripture abundantly testifies. This is the first privilege of believers under the gospel. They *come to mount Sion*; that is, they are interested in all the *promises* of God made to Sion, recorded in the scripture; in all the *love and care* of God expressed towards it; in all the *spiritual glories* assigned to it. The things spoken of it were never accomplished in the *earthly* Sion; but typically, spiritually, and in their reality they belong to believers under the New Testament. All the *promises*, therefore, which were made of old to Sion, do belong to the present church of believers. These in every condition they may plead with God; they have the grace, and shall have the comfort contained in them. There is the security and assurance of their safety, preservation, and eternal salvation. Hereon depends their final deliverance from all their oppressions.

Be their outward condition never so mean and destitute; be they afflicted, persecuted, and despised, yet all the glorious things that are spoken of Sion are theirs, and accomplished in them in the sight of God, however excellent and innumerable.

Let this be compared with the people's coming to mount Sinai, as before declared, and the glory of it will be conspicuous. And believers are to be admonished, to walk worthy of the privilege, Psalm xv; to be thankful for it; to rejoice in it; and to make it an effectual motive to obedience and perseverance.

§3. They are said to come "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Both these are the same. So Jerusalem is called the city of God; Psal. xlvii, 4; xlviii, 1, 8; lxxxvii, 3. But in every place with respect to Sion.

1. They came to a *city*. They received the law in a *wilderness*, where they had neither rest nor refuge. But in a city there is order, defence, and safety; it is the name of a quiet habitation,

2. This was the *city of God*. The state of the church under the New Testament hath the safety, and beautiful order of a city, the city of God; the only city which he takes peculiarly to be his own in this world. It is his on account of propriety; he framed it, he built it, it is his own; no creature can lay claim to it, or any part of it. And those who usurp a dominion over it, shall answer to him for their usurpation. It is his on account of *inhabitation*; for he dwelleth in it, and in it alone, by his gracious presence. It is under God's *rule*, as its only sovereign. Therein he disposeth all his children to a spiritual society. So Paul tells the Ephesians, that by grace they were delivered from being strangers and foreigners, and made fellow citizens with the saints, and the household of God, Ephes. ii, 19.

3. The apostle adds a property of God of great consideration in this matter. It is "the city of the living God;" that is, of the true and only God. Of him who is omnipotent, able to keep and preserve his own

city, as having all life, and consequently all power in himself. Of him who lives eternally, and with whom we shall live, when we shall be no more here.

4. This city of the living God, is the *heavenly Jerusalem*. And the apostle herein prefers the privileges of the gospel, not only above what the people were made partakers of at Sinai in the wilderness; but also above all that afterwards they enjoyed in *Jerusalem* in the land of Canaan. For in the glory and privileges of that city the Hebrews greatly boasted. But the apostle casts that city, in the state wherein it then was, into the same condition with mount Sinai in Arabia, that is, under bondage, Gal. iv, 25; and he opposeth thereto that Jerusalem which is above, that is, this *heavenly Jerusalem*. And it is called *heavenly*; because, as a city, it is not of this world; because no small part of its inhabitants are already actually instated in heaven; because as to its state on earth, it comes down from heaven, Rev. xxi, 2, 3; that is, hath its original from divine authority and institution; because the portion and inheritance of all its inhabitants lie in heaven: because the spiritual life and graces of all that belong to it are heavenly; and, finally, because their (*πολιτευμα*) *city conversation*, is in heaven.

§4. And we may yet a little farther represent the glory of this privilege, in the ensuing remarks:

1. A city is the only place of *rest*, peace, safety, and honor, among men in this world. To all these, in the spiritual sense, we are brought by the gospel. Whilst men are under the law, they are at Sinai, in a wilderness where there are none of these things. The souls of sinners can find no place of rest or safety under the law. But we have all these things by the gospel. Rest in Christ, peace with God, order in the commun-



ion of faith, safety in divine protection, and honor in our relation to God in Christ.

2. The greatest and most glorious city which is, or ever was in the *world*, is the city of this or that man who hath power or dominion in it. The *gospel church* is the city of the living God; and it is ten thousand times more glorious to be a citizen thereof than of the greatest city in the world. To be a citizen of the city of God, is to be free, to be honorable, to be safe, to have a certain habitation, and a blessed inheritance.

3. God *dwells* in the church of believers. The great king inhabits his own city. Herein is the special residence of his glory and majesty. He built it, framed it for himself, and says concerning it, "There will I dwell, and this shall be my habitation for ever." And it is no small privilege to dwell with God in his own city. The name of this city is "*Jehovah Shammah*," *the Lord is there*, Ezek. xlviii, 35.

4. The privileges of this city of God are *heavenly*, it is the "*heavenly Jerusalem*." Thence it is that the world knows them not, values them not.

§5. In the next place the apostle affirms, that believers are come to "an innumerable company of angels;" (*μυριασι αγγελων*) *to myriads of angels*. A *myriad* is *ten thousand*, and when it is used in the plural number, it signifies an innumerable company, as we here render it. Possibly he hath respect to the angels that attended the presence of God in the giving of the law, whereof the Psalmist says; "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them as in Sinai in the holy place," Psal. lxxviii, 17; or the account of them given by Daniel; "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him," chap. vii, 10; that is an innumerable company.

This access to angels is spiritual. The access of the people to their ministry in Sinai was *corporeal* only; nor had they any communion with them thereby; but ours is *spiritual*, in virtue of the *recapitulation* of them and us in Christ, Ephes. i, 10; they and we are brought into one mystical body, whereof Christ is the head; one family which is in heaven and earth, called after his name, Ephes. iii, 14, 15; we are brought together into one society; they and we are constantly engaged in the same worship of Jesus Christ. Hence they call themselves our fellow servants. This God hath given in command to them as well as to us. For he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him," chap. i, 6; which they accordingly do, Rev. v, 11, 12.

Besides; there is a *ministry* committed to them for the service of the church, chap. i, 14; and the fear and dread of their ministry is now taken from us, which was so great under the Old Testament, that those to whom they appeared thought they must die immediately. There is therefore a perfect reconciliation between the church on earth and the angels above; the distance and enmity occasioned by sin is taken away, Col. i, 20. There is a *oneness* in design, and a communion in service between them and us; as we rejoice in their happiness and glory, so they seek ours continually; their ascription of praise and glory to God, is mingled with the praises of the church, so as to compose an intire worship, Rev. v, 9—12.

Wherefore by Jesus Christ we have a blessed access to this innumerable company of angels. Those who, by reason of our fall from God, and the first entrance of sin, had no regard to us, but to execute the vengeance of God against us, represented by the cherubims with the *flaming sword* (for he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire) to keep

man, when he had sinned, out of Eden, and from the tree of life, Gen. iii. 24; those, whose ministry God made use of in giving the law, to fill the people with dread and terror; those, I say, are now in Christ become one mystical body with the church, and now associates in design and service. And this may well be esteemed an eminent privilege which we receive by the gospel.

§6. And if this be so, then we may infer,

1. The church is the *safest society* in the world. A kingdom it is, a city, a family, an house, which the power of hell and the world can never prevail against. Nor are these *boasting words*, (whatever distressed condition it may be in, in this world) but the faithful sayings of God. Let us not fear the ruin of the church, whilst there is an innumerable company of angels belonging to it.

2. It is the most *honorable society* in the world; for all the angels of heaven belong to it. This poor, despicable, persecuted church, consisting for the most part of such as are contemned in the world, is admitted to the society of all the holy angels in heaven, in the worship and service of Christ.

3. And we may see hence the folly of that voluntary humility in the *worshipping* of angels, which the apostle condemns, and which is openly practised in the church of Rome. They worship those who are only the fellow servants of true believers.

4. It is the highest madness for any one to pretend himself to be the head of the church, as the Pope doth, unless he assume also to himself to be the head of *all the angels in heaven*, for they all belong to the same church with the saints here below. And therefore when mention is made of the headship of Christ, they are expressly placed in the same subjection to him, Ephes. i, 20—23.

§7. Another instance of the glory of this state is, that therein believers come to the "*general assembly and church* of the first-born."

1. Perhaps the words here used, (*πανηγυρις* and *εκκλησια*) are borrowed from the customs of those cities, whose government was democratical; especially that of Athens, whose speech was the rule of the Greek language. The *former* word was used for the *solemn assembly* of all persons belonging to the city, where they were entertained with spectacles, sacrifices, festival solemnities, and laudatory orations; hence (*λογος πανηγυρικος*) a *commendatory oration*. And therefore the word is used for any *great assembly*, as we here translate it, with respect to praise and joy. In these assemblies no business of the state was transacted. But the *latter* (*εκκλησια*) was a *meeting of citizens* to determine affairs which had a previous deliberation in the senate. Hence it is applied to signify that which we call the *church*; or (*ἐκκλησία*) the *congregation*; which is an assembly for all the spiritual ends of the society. But,

2. I rather think the apostle hath respect to the *great assembly* of all the males of the church of the Old Testament. This was a divine institution to be observed three times a year, at the solemn feasts of the church, Exod. xxxiv, 23; Deut. xvi, 16; and the assembly of them was called the *great congregation*, Psal. xxii, 25; xxxv, 18; being the greatest solemnities, and the most glorious in the whole church; a matter of triumph to them all. Or,

3. It may be, regard is had to the *general assembly* of the whole people at *Sinai*, in the receiving of the law. But there is a great *difference* between those assemblies and this. For to those civil and political assemblies, as also that of the church, it was necessary, that there should be a *local* meeting of all belonging

to them; but the assembly and church here intended, are *spiritual*, and so is their meeting or convention. There never was, nor ever shall be, a *local meeting* of them all, until the last day. At present, such as is the nature of their *society*, such is their *convention*; that is spiritual. But yet all that belong to the general assembly intended, which is the seat of praise and joy, are obliged by virtue of special institution, whilst in this world, to assemble in particular societies.

§8. "*Of the first-born which are written in heaven.*" There is no reason to confine this expression (as some expositors do) to the apostles; especially since most of them at that time were among the spirits of just men made perfect; wherefore, in my judgment, the whole church of *elect believers*, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, as one general assembly, is intended, and which he celebrates elsewhere as one of the greatest mysteries of divine wisdom, which was hid in God from the beginning of the world, and not till then revealed: See Ephes. iii, 5—10. This assembly is described, Rev. v, 9, 10, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of everykindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God kings and priests;" that is, one general assembly and church of the first-born.

And their coming to this assembly is opposed to their coming to mount Sinai; for therein was both (*συν- γογία*) *general assembly*; and (*ἐκκλησία*) *a church*. It was a *general assembly*, as consisting of all that people, men, women, and children; and it was a *church*, Acts vii, 38, on account of the order which was in it, in the station of the elders, priests, &c. This therefore, is the general assembly of the first-born, written or enrolled in heaven; viz. the elect of God called, and by gratuitous adoption interested in all the privileges of the first-born; that is, made co-heirs with Christ,

and heirs of God, or of the whole heavenly inheritance. But although this is comprehensive of them all in all generations, yet *believers come* in a peculiar manner to them of whom the church of God doth consist, in the days of their profession.

§9. The apostle proceeds, in the next place, to mind us of the supreme head of his holy society; “and to God the judge of all.” It is not improbable but that in the enumeration of these glorious privileges, the apostle makes mention of the *relation* of God to this society and communion, to beget in believers a due *reverence* of what they are called to therein; and so he shuts up his improvement of this whole discourse.

There is no access to God but by Jesus Christ, signified by the severe *interdict* against the touching the mount, or taking one step over its bounds to gaze, when the tokens of his presence were upon it, in the legislation; but also believers have *access* by Christ,—“*To the Judge of all.*” This may not seem a *privilege*, for it is the lot of *all men* to appear before his judgment seat: but it is one thing to be brought before a judge to be tried, and sentenced as criminals; another to have a *favorable access* to him, as our necessities require; and such is the access here intended.

But to this *access* there are previously required, the pardon of our sins, the justification of our persons, and the sanctification of our natures, without which no man can behold God as a judge, but to his confusion; behold, then, how great is the privilege of that state, which we are called to by the gospel; which gives us such a sense and assurance of our pardon, adoption, justification, and sanctification, as that we may with boldness come to the *judge of all* on his throne!

§10. It followeth in the next place, that we are “come to the spirits of just men made perfect.” The

*just men* intended, were all those whose faith he had declared, chap. xi; with all others of the same sort, from the foundation of the world; and in following their example, whilst they were on the earth, we are admitted to communion with them now they are in heaven.

The spirits of just men are said to be made *perfect*, to be consummated; and herein three things are included; the *end of the race* wherein they had been engaged; the race of faith and obedience with all the difficulties, duties, and temptations belonging thereto; a *perfect deliverance* from all sin, sorrow, trouble, labor, and temptation, which in this life they were exposed to; and, *the enjoyment of the reward*; for it is not consistent with the righteousness of God, to defer it after the whole course of their obedience is accomplished. This consummation they have in the presence of God, according to their capacity, before the resurrection, there being nothing wanting to them but the reception of their bodies in a state of glory. Though they are made *perfect*, yet they are but *spirits*.

And here we have a clear prospect into this part of the invisible world; the state of the souls of just men departed. For it is declared, that they *subsist*, acting their intellectual powers and faculties. For how could we *come to them* that are not, or are without the exercise of their essential powers and faculties? They are in the *presence of God*. For in our access to God "the judge of all," we come to the spirits of just men made perfect, who must be in his presence; so in his presence, as to be in conjunction with the holy angels in the temple worship of heaven. They live in the same love of God which animates the whole catholic church below; they join with it in the ascriptions of the same praises of God and the Lamb, and have a concernment in the church militant, as belonging to that mystical

body of Christ wherein themselves are sharers. Again; they are *consummated*, or made perfect, freed from all sins; fears, dangers, temptations, clogs of the flesh, and obnoxiousness to death. Their faith is heightened into vision, and all their graces elevated into glory.

§11. The apostle proceeds to the immediate spring and centre of all this catholic communion; "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." He calls him here by the name of "*Jesus*," which is significant of his saving the church; which he doth as mediator of the new covenant, chap. ix, 15—17, &c.

He is here mentioned in opposition to *Moses*, who, as to the general nature and notion of the word, was a mediator, or *middle agent*, between God and the people. But as to the special nature of the mediation of Jesus he had no interest in it. He was not the *surety* of the covenant to God on the people's part. He did not confirm the covenant by his own death. He did not offer himself in sacrifice to God, as Jesus did; but as an *internuntius*, to declare the mind of God to the people, he was a mediator appointed by God, and chosen by the people themselves, Exod. xx. To him as such the people came. They were all "baptised into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea," 1 Cor. x, 2. In opposition hereto, believers come to "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant;" which includes an interest in that new covenant, and all the benefits of it. Whatever, therefore, is of mercy, grace, or glory, prepared in the new covenant, and its promises, we are made partakers of it all, by our access to Christ, the mediator of it. And whereas before he had evidenced from the scripture how much *more excellent* this covenant is, than that made with the people at Sinai; there is a peculiar force in it to persuade them to steadfastness in the profession of the



gospel, which is aimed at in all these divine reasonings.

§12. Again, the most signal instance wherein the Lord Jesus exercised and executed his office of mediation on earth, was the *shedding of his blood* for the confirmation of the covenant, whereof he was the mediator; hence it is added, "And to the blood of *sprinkling*;" so called, no doubt, in allusion to all the various typical sprinklings of blood by divine institution under the Old Testament. But whereas it is immediately annexed to the mention of him, as "mediator of the new covenant," it especially respects the sprinkling of the blood wherewith the *covenant at mount Horeb* was confirmed. As that old covenant was ratified and confirmed by the mediator of it, with the sprinkling of the blood of sacrificed oxen; so the new covenant was confirmed by the blood of the mediator himself of the new covenant offered in sacrifice to God.

Wherefore the blood of Christ, is called, "the *blood of sprinkling*," with respect to the *application* of it to believers, as to all the ends and effects for which it was offered in sacrifice to God; and to be *sprinkled* with the blood of it, is to have the expiating and cleansing efficacy of it applied to us; see chap. i, 3; ix, 14, with the Exposition.

§13. "That speaketh better things than that of Abel." It *speaks*; it hath a voice; it pleads; and this must be either with God or man. But whereas it is the blood of a sacrifice, whose object was God, to *him* it speaks.

1. It speaks *good things* absolutely. To "speak" here is to call for, cry for, plead for; it speaks to God by virtue of the everlasting compact between the Father and the Son, in his undertaking the work of mediation; it speaks for the communication of all the

good things of the covenant in mercy, grace, and glory, to the church. It did so when it was shed, and it continues to do so in his intercessory presentation of it in heaven.

2. It speaks *good things* comparatively; "better things than that of Abel." It is expressly recorded, that Abel's own *blood*, after it was shed, did speak, cry, and plead for vengeance, or the punishment of the murderer. So speaks God himself: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," Gen. iv, 10. The ground of the comparison used by the apostle is plainly this; that whereas the blood of Christ was shed by their *wicked hands*, even as Abel's was by the hands of Cain, the consideration of that might cast many of the Jews who were consenting thereto into Cain's desperation; he seasonably shews, that the blood of Christ (as the blood of the covenant) never cried as Abel's did, for vengeance on them by whom it was shed, but pleaded their pardon; so speaking things quite of another nature than did that of Abel. This, therefore, is the plain, obvious, and only true sense of the place.

§ 14. Our last inquiry on these words is; *How we come to all these things?* I answer,

1. The *original* of this communion, the framer of this society, is God himself, even the Father, in a peculiar manner. Therefore doth our admission into it arise from, and depend upon that peculiar act of his, "*election*," Ephes. i, 3, 4.

2. The only *means* of an actual admission into this society is, Jesus Christ, in his person and mediation. For although the elect angels be not redeemed and justified by him, as we are, yet their *station in this society* is from him, Ephes. i, 10. Wherefore,

3. The means on *our part*, whereby we come to

this state and society, is, *faith in Christ*. Hereby we come to him; and coming to him he makes us free citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

If this only true notion of the catholic church were received as it ought to be, it would cast contempt on all those contentions about the church, which at this day so perplex the world. He who is first enstated by faith on the person and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ in this heavenly society, will be guided by the light and privileges of it into such ways of divine worship in churches here below, as shall cause him to improve and grow in his interest in that above. And he who is not admitted into this society, let him be in the bosom, or at the head of all the churches in the world, it will be of no advantage to him.

§15. (II.) From the above representation of things observe:

1. All pleas about church order, power, rights, and privileges, are useless, where men are not interested in the *Sion* state.

2. It is our duty well to consider what sort of persons they ought to be, who are meet to be denizens of this city of God.

3. The revelation of the glorious mystery of this general assembly is one of the most excellent pre-eminences of the gospel above the law. A mystery it was of divine wisdom hid in God from the beginning; but now shining out in its beauty and glory. An interest, therefore, herein is well proposed by the apostle as one eminent privilege of believers.

4. All the right and title of believers, under the Old Testament to sonship, or the right of the first-born, arose merely from their interest in him, and participation of him, who is absolutely so. All things are theirs, because they are Christ's, 1 Cor. iii, 23, 23. Without

this, whatever are our outward enjoyments and privileges, whatever place of dignity we may hold in the visible professing church; we have neither lot nor portion in things spiritual and eternal.

5. It is a glorious privilege to be brought to this blessed society, this general assembly of the first-born; and as such it is here proposed. And we shall find it so, if we consider what company, society, and assembly we belong to without it; for this is no other than that of devils and the wicked seed of the serpent.

6. If we are come to this assembly, it is our duty carefully to behave ourselves as becometh the members of this society.

7. All contests about church order, state, interest, power, with whom the church is, &c. are all vain, empty, and unprofitable, among those who cannot evidence that they belong to this general assembly.

8. Eternal election is the rule of the dispensation of effectual grace, to call and collect an assembly of the first-born to God.

§16. We may farther *observe*:

1. In Jesus Christ believers are delivered from all discouraging dread and terror, in the consideration of God as a judge; such I mean as befell the people at Sinai in the giving of the law. They now behold all his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, which makes it amiable and desirable to them.

2. Such is the pre-eminence of the gospel state above that of the law, that whereas they of old were severely forbid to make *any approach* to the outward signs of the presence of God, we now have an *access with boldness* to his throne.

3. As the *greatest misery* of unbelievers is to be brought to the presence of this eternal Judge, so it is one of the *greatest privileges* of believers that they

may come to him. Hence is that cry of hypocritical sinners; Isa. xxxiii, 14, "Who among us," &c.

4. Believers have an access to God, as the judge of all, with all their causes and complaints. As such he will hear them, plead their cause and judge for them. However they may be here oppressed, in or out of the courts of men, the *Judge of all* will at all times receive their appeals, and do them right. This liberty no man can deprive them of; it is purchased for them by Christ; and make their oppressions unsafe to the greatest of the sons of men. Wherefore,

5. However dangerous and dreadful the outward state of the church may be at any time in the world, it may secure itself of final success; because therein God is judge alone, to whom they have free access.

6. The prospect of an eternal reward from God, as the righteous judge, is the greatest support of faith in all present distresses.

7. A prospect by faith into the state of the departed souls of believers, is both a comfort against the fears of death, and a support under all troubles and distresses of this present life.

§17. 1. This is the blessedness and safety of the catholic church, that it is taken into such a covenant, and hath an interest in such a mediator of it, as are able to save it to the utmost.

2. The true notion of faith for life and salvation is a coming unto Jesus as the mediator of the New Testament, for thereby we have an egress and deliverance from the covenant of works, and the curse wherewith it is accompanied.

3. It is the wisdom of faith to make use of that mediator continually, in all wherein we have to do with God. To be negligent herein, is to reflect on the wisdom and grace of God, in appointing him to be the

mediator of the covenant, and on his love and power to discharge that office.

4. The glory, the safety, the pre-eminence of the state of believers under the gospel consists in this; that they come therein to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. This is the centre of all spiritual privileges, the rise of all spiritual joys, and the full satisfaction of the souls of all that believe.

VERSE 25.

*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.*

§1. Introduction. §2. (I.) Exposition. Him that speaketh. §3. He that spake on earth, who? §4. How the people refused him that then spoke, and did not escape. §5. Him that speaketh from heaven. §6. To turn away from him, what. §7. (II.) Observations.

§1. **H**AVING given a summary account of the two states of the law and gospel, with the incomparable excellence of the latter above the former, the apostle draws from hence a charge and exhortation addressed both to them who had actually professed the gospel, and them to whom it had been preached, but who had not received and professed it. In brief, he intended all sorts in their several states and capacities, to whom the gospel had been preached.

§2. (I.) "See that ye refuse not," (τον λαλῶντα) *him that speaketh*. There is a general rule in the words, that we are diligently to attend to, and not to refuse, any that speak to us in the name and authority of Christ; but yet the *person* of Christ himself is immediately intended.

And this command hath respect to the *double solemn charge* given of God to the church; the first on the closing of the law, the other as the beginning and

foundation of the gospel. The first charge was given to prepare the church for their duty in its proper season, Deut. xviii, 18, 19. The other charge was given immediately from heaven, as the foundation of the gospel, Matt. xvii, 5. This is the foundation of all gospel faith and obedience, and the formal reason of the condemnation of all unbelievers. God hath given *command* to all men to hear, that is, believe and obey his Son Jesus Christ. By virtue thereof he hath given command to others, to preach the gospel to all individuals. They who believe them, believe in Christ; and they who believe in Christ through him, believe in God, 1 Pet. i, 21; so that their faith is ultimately resolved into the authority of God himself. And so they who *refuse* them, who *hear not* them, do thereby refuse Christ himself; and by so doing reject the authority of God, who hath given this command to hear him, and hath taken on himself to require it when it is neglected; which is the condemnation of all unbelievers.

Again; the apostle gives an enforcement of this duty taken from the consideration of the person with whom they had to do, and a comparison between the *event* of the neglect of this duty in them, and a neglect of the same kind of duty in those to whom the law was given. But,

§3. Who is (της επι της γης χρηματιζουσα) *he that spake on earth?* The word (χρηματιζειν) in scripture is applied to *God alone*, and he who *spake* on the earth, *his voice then shook the earth*; which was not the voice of Moses. Some therefore say, that an *angel* is intended, who delivered all those oracles on mount Sinai in the name of God. But it deserves notice, that in giving the law he lays the whole weight of its authority on the *person* of the speaker, saying, "I am the

Lord thy God." If all this may be ascribed to an angel, then there is one who is an *angel by office*, and *God by nature*; or we are bound to take a created angel to be our God. Wherefore, he that then spoke on earth, who gave these divine oracles, was none other but the *Son of God himself*; or the divine nature acting itself in a peculiar manner in the person of the Son; and to him all things agree. What is purely divine was proper to his *person*, and what was of condescension belonged to him in a way of *office*, as he was the angel of the covenant, in whom was the name of God. It again deserves notice, that the *opposition* expressed is not between the *persons* speaking, but between *earth* and *heaven*, as the next verse sufficiently shews. And that verse declares positively, that it was one and the *same person*, whose voice then shook the earth, and who under the gospel shaketh the heaven also. But let us inquire,

§4. How the people (*παρῆλαμμένοι*) refused him, who spake on earth? The word here used is the same with that which ver. 19, we render by *entreated to hear no more*, that is, deprecated the hearing of the voice of God. It discovered the want of that faith and filial boldness, which were necessary to enable them to abide with God. With respect hereto the apostle might justly date their *departure* from God, and refusal of obedience, which immediately ensued on this discovery, so that they liked not the presence and voice of God. But the people's *actual refusal* of obedience began in their making the golden calf, while Moses was in the mount, Exod. xxxii, from which they *did not escape*; for, besides that three thousand of them on that occasion were *slain* by the sword—and God made it a record concerning that sin; "In the day wherein I will visit, I will visit their



sin upon them; and the "Lord plagued the people,"<sup>a</sup> Exod. xxxii, 34, 35; after this ensued sundry other rebellions of the people, in all which they *refused him* who spake on earth.

§5. "Much more shall not we escape if we turn away from (τον ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ) *him* that is, or speaketh, *from heaven.*" This is fully declared by himself; John iii, 12, 13, "If I have told you *earthly* things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of *heavenly* things." "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down *from heaven*, even the Son of Man who is in heaven." Add hereto, ver. 31, "He that *cometh from heaven* is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that *cometh from heaven* is above all."<sup>a</sup> See John vi, 33—38. These places treat of the same matter as that intended in the text; namely, the revelation of heavenly things, or the mysteries of the will of God by Jesus Christ in each place it is affirmed, that to make this revelation he came *from heaven*; so that emphatically "*he was from heaven*;" but withal, whilst he did so, he was still in heaven, "the Son of Man who is in heaven." He was so *from heaven* in his *descent* to declare the will of God, as that he was in his *divine person* still in heaven. Wherefore he is from heaven as for other reasons so eminently on account of his *opening heaven*, and all the treasures of it, bringing life and immortality to light by the gospel, in comparison whereof the things of the law are called earthly things.

§6. We must next inquire, what it is to *turn away from him* who thus speaketh from heaven? And sundry things are included in this expression:

1. That in the declaration of the gospel by Jesus Christ from heaven, there is a *call*, an *invitation* of

sinners to come to him, to be made partakers of the good things contained therein. And herein it differeth sufficiently from the law in the giving of it. For that was so far from being proposed with an encouraging invitation to come to God thereby, as that it was only a *terrible denunciation* of duties and penalties, which they that heard *could not endure*, and removed as far as they could from it.

2. There is in this turning away a *dislike of the terms* of the gospel proposed to them. And therein they despise the wisdom, grace, and faithfulness of God to the utmost. This is emphatically *unbelief*.

3. There is in this turning away, a *rejection of the authority* of Christ; for besides the matter which he declared and preached, his *personal authority* had its peculiar power and efficacy to require obedience; this the apostle here had an especial respect to. It was he who was "from heaven," and who spake in the name of him that sent him, even in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; so that all authority in heaven and earth was in him, and present with him. It is evident on these considerations, that human nature cannot more highly despise and provoke God, than by this sin of unbelief. But,

4. An *obstinacy* in the refusal of him is also included herein; it is a turning away that is final and incurable.

§7. (II.) From what has been said *observe*;

1. Unbelief under the preaching of the gospel is the great, and, in some respect, the only damning sin, as being accompanied with, yea, greatly consisting in, the last and utmost contempt of the authority of God.

2. There is in all sin and disobedience a *rejection of the authority of God*, in the giving of the law.

3. No sinner can escape divine vengeance, if he be tried and judged according to the law, *see* Psal. cxxx, 3.

4. It is the duty of gospel ministers diligently and effectually to declare the nature of *unbelief*, with the heinousness of its guilt, above all other sins whatever; sins against the light of nature, or express commands of the law, most men are sensible of; but as to unbelief, and all the consequents of it, they regard it not; but it is not more their duty to declare the nature of faith, and to invite men to Christ in the gospel, than it is to make known the nature of unbelief, and to evidence the woful aggravations of it, Mark xvi, 16.

5. This is the issue whereinto things are brought between God and sinners wherever the gospel is preached, namely, whether they will hear the Lord Christ, or turn away from him. On this one point alone depends their eternal safety or misery; if they *hear* him, God *puts an end* to the whole claim of the law against them on the account of all other sins; if they *refuse* him, they are left under the guilt of all their sins against the law, with the unspeakable aggravation of the contempt of Christ speaking to them from heaven for their relief.

6. The grace, goodness, and mercy of God will not be more illustrious and glorious to all eternity, in the salvation of believers by Jesus Christ, than his justice, holiness, and severity in the condemnation of unbelievers.

#### VERSES 26, 27.

*Whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven; and this, yet once more, signifieth the removing of the things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain.*

§1. Explanation of the words. The voice of Christ shook the earth. §2. And the heavens also. §3. The apostle's inferences. The removal of things that are shaken. §4. And the establishment of the gospel kingdom, §5. Observations:

§1. THESE verses contain an illustration of the exhortation in the foregoing verse.

(Οὗ ἡ φωνή) *whose voice*; that is, the voice of him who is from heaven; Jesus Christ the Son of God, the author of the gospel, who is last spoken of; nor is there any other in the context to whom the relative (ς) *whose* should refer. The *voice* of Christ absolutely is his great power in exercise; so all the mighty effects of Providence are ascribed to the “voice” of God, Psal. xxix, 3—9. In particular, the declaration and exerting of his power in the giving of the law is here intended; (τότε) *then*; at the time when the law was given, as opposed to what he would do *now*. (Εσαλευσε την γην) *shook the earth*; referring to the great commotion that was at mount Sinai before described, ver. 18—21; and the *shaking* is said to be of the *earth*, because it was *all on the earth*, and this is put for a *part* of the earth by a synecdoche; and we have here an illustrious evidence given to the *divine nature* of Christ; for it is unavoidable, that he whose voice this was, is no other but he that spake from heaven in the promulgation of the gospel; which to deny, is not only far from truth, but all pretence of modesty. It is evidently one and the same person, who both *spoke from heaven* in the promulgation of the gospel; and whose voice *shook the earth* in the giving of the law, and who promised in the prophet to *shake heaven* also; unless this be granted there is no sense, no co-herence in the apostle’s discourse.

§2. The apostle adds another demonstration of the great power of Christ in what he hath promised to do; “But now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” The words are taken from Hag. ii, 6, 7; a part only of which text

is quoted; the prophet affirming that he would shake "the *heaven and the earth*;" the apostle in an accommodation to his present purpose expresseth it, "*not only the earth*," as of old, "*but the heaven also*;" wherefore in this *new speaking*, a shaking of the *earth* also is comprised.

The principal inquiry is, what is the shaking of the heavens and earth intended, and at what season it was to be done? and for the clearing hereof we must observe, that the *same thing and time* is intended by the prophet and the apostle; for unless this be granted, there can be no force in this testimony to his purpose; and indeed these things are spoken by the prophet evidently and expressly with respect to the *first coming* of Christ, and the promulgation of the gospel thereupon. Again, there is no reason why we should take this *shaking* "not only of the earth, but of heaven," or as the prophet expresses it, of "the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land," in a *literal* or *natural sense*; the *prophet* expounds it all in the next words, "And I will *shake all nations*;" and moreover they are *spiritual* things whereof the *apostle* discourseth, such as end in that unshakened kingdom which believers receive in this world; whereas therefore it is evident, that the apostle treats about the dealing of Christ with his church, both in the giving of the law, and the promulgation of the gospel; the signification of these expressions must be the *great alteration* he would make in the church state, with the mighty works and commotions with which it was to be accompanied; besides, it is self-evident that the dealing of God with the church, and the alterations which he would make in the state thereof, is that concerning which the apostle treats; therefore it is the "heavens" of *Mosaical worship*, and the Judaical church state; with the

"earth" of their *political state* belonging thereunto, that are intended; this was far more great and glorious than the shaking of the earth at the giving of the law.

§3. "And this word yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things which are shaken, as of things which are made." This is the conclusion of the whole argumentative part of this epistle, that which was aimed at from the beginning; for, having fully proved the excellency of the gospel state above that under the law, and confirmed it by an examination of all the concernments of the one and the other, as we have seen; he now declares from the scripture, according to his usual mode of dealing with those Hebrews, that all the *ancient institutions* of worship, and the whole *church state* of the old covenant, was now to be removed, and *taken away*, to make way for that better state, a state more glorious, that should never be obnoxious to change or alteration.

This expression, "*yet once more*," plainly intimates—that there had been a *similar* work wrought before; which, as to the general nature of it, was the erection of a *new ecclesiastical state*, which God *then* wrought, and the like he would now do *again*; and therefore—it signifies the *removal* of that which was before; the things intended were *shaken*, even by God himself; and the things that were to be effected by this new work were to be *introduced* into their place; and therefore of necessity they were to be *removed*; so the apostle deduces the sole necessity of their removal from the *establishment* of "the things that cannot be shaken;" which therefore must be of the same general nature and use with them; namely, a *new church state*, and *new divine worship*; in short, THE GOSPEL, WITH ITS PRIVILEGES.

The apostle also intimates the original ground and equity of the removal of the one, and the introduction of the other; (*ως πεποιημένων*) *as of things that were made; so made*, as that they were made only for a season, until a time of reformation, chap. ix, 10.

§4. In the room of these things removed, things that cannot be shaken are to be established; these things in the next verse he calls a kingdom that cannot be moved, which believers receive; that is, the things of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ; the gospel with all its privileges, worship, and excellency, in relation to Christ, his person, office, and grace; the things that cannot be moved are to remain and be established against all opposition whatever. Wherefore, as the heavens and the earth of the *idolatrous* world were of old shaken and removed; so shall those also of the *antichristian* world, which at present in many places seem to prevail; for if God made way for his glory, by the removal of his own institutions, appointed for a season, what else shall hinder its establishment and progress to the end?

§5. And we may hence *observe*;

1. The sovereign authority and mighty power of Christ are gloriously manifested in that signal change and alteration which he made in the state and worship of the church by the promulgation of the gospel.

2. God was pleased to give testimony to the greatness and glory of this work, by the greatest commotions in heaven and earth wherewith it was accompanied.

3. It was a mighty work to introduce the gospel among the nations of the earth, seeing their gods and heavens were to be *shaken and removed*.

## VERSES 28, 29.

*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.*

§1. The doctrinal and hortatory parts of the epistle here concluded. §2. The state of a gospel is a kingdom that cannot be moved. §3. Which believers receive. §4. The duty exhorted to, the serving of God acceptably. §5. And to have grace. §6. The manner of performing the duty with reverence and godly fear. §7. The reason enforcing the duty. §8, 9. Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle in these verses sums up both the doctrinal and hortatory parts of the epistle; and from hence to the close of it brancheth his general exhortation into a prescription of particular duties of the most importance to his general end; the note of inference (*διο*) *wherefore*, may respect either the whole discourse which he hath now passed through, or that immediately preceding, concerning the shaking and removal of the Judaical church state, with the introduction and establishment of the things of the kingdom of Christ; the force of the exhortation ariseth equally from either of them. *Note*, Such is the nature and the use of all divine truths, that the teaching of them ought constantly to be applied and improved to practice; for *faith and obedience* is the end of their revelation.

§2. (*Βασιλειαν*) *a kingdom*; an heavenly spiritual state under the rule of Jesus Christ, whom God hath anointed and set upon his holy hill of Sion, Psal. ii, 6, 7. The state of the gospel, and the rule of Christ therein was represented and promised from the beginning under the name and notion of a *kingdom*. And it is usually, but *improperly*, distributed into the kingdom of *grace*, and the kingdom of *glory*; for, according to that distribution, the *former* part of it would be *removed*. Wherefore, "the kingdom of heaven," 20



often mentioned in the scripture, is that only which we call the *kingdom of God*. And, at present, those in heaven, and those on earth, constitute but *one kingdom*, though they are in various conditions. Christ is the *king*; the gospel is the *law*; all believers are his *subjects*; the Holy Spirit is its *administrator*; and all the divine treasures of grace and mercy are its *revenue*.

The especial property of this kingdom is, that (*ἀσάλευτος*) it *cannot be moved*, or shaken; and to speak of the *unshaken, immoveable kingdom*, is all one as if expressly mentioned the *kingdom of Christ*; seeing that only is so. But that which is here peculiarly intended is, that it is not obnoxious to such a shaking or removal, as the church state was under the Old Testament; that is, God himself would never make any *alteration* in it, nor ever introduce another church state, or worship; but hath, by his eternal Son, put the *last hand* to it.

§3. Believers *receive* this kingdom. They have it by grant or donation from God their father; Luke xii, 32, "Fear not little flock, saith Christ, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" freely to grant you an interest in his heavenly kingdom. They *receive* it in its doctrine, rule, and law; owning its truth, and submitting to its authority. And though, with respect to Christ, and his rule, we are absolutely *subjects*; yet, with respect to others, we are absolutely free; "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye servants of men," 1 Cor. vii, 23. They receive it by an initiation into the sacred mysteries of it, the glory of its spiritual worship, and their access to God thereby. And in all these things, they receive it as a *pledge* of a future reign in glory.

§4. The duty exhorted to, on the consideration of

this blessed state and privilege is, that we “serve God acceptably.” I judge, that here is a peculiar respect to the worship of God, *according to the gospel*, which was brought in upon the removal of all those institutions of worship, which were appointed under the Old Testament. (Εὐαγγελίως) *acceptably* so that we may be *accepted*, or find acceptance with him. There is an intimation, that there may be a performance of the duties of divine worship, when yet neither the persons that perform them, nor the duties themselves, are *accepted* of God. The principal things required are—That the *persons* of the worshippers be accepted in the Beloved; that the worship itself, in all the duties of it, and the whole manner of its performance, be of God’s own *appointment* and approbation; that the *graces* of faith and love, fear, reverence, and delight, be in actual exercise.

§5. In order to this *serving of God*, it is required of us, in a way of duty, that we *have grace*. It is not a *privilege* asserted, but a *duty* prescribed. “Grace” here is to be, therefore, taken for the internal spiritual aids of grace, as necessary to enable us for the duty of serving God acceptably. This is the proper sense of the place. “You that have *received* grace (essentially considered) for your sanctification, endeavor much after an *increase* of it, in its degrees and measures; that by its being in continual exercise, you may be enabled to *serve God acceptably*.” And, indeed, without this grace we cannot serve God at all. He accounts not *that*, as his worship or service, which is performed by graceless persons. This is the great apostolic canon, for the due performance of divine worship. “Let us have grace to do it;” all other canons are needless and superfluous.

§6. The manner of performing the duty is, "with reverence and godly fear." The sense of the words in this place may be learned best from what they are *opposed* to; for they are prescribed against such *defects* and *faults* in divine worship, as from which we ought to be deterred, by the consideration of the holiness and severity of God, as is manifest from the next words: "For our God is a consuming fire." Now these faults are—want of a due sense of the *majesty and glory of God*, with whom we have to do; want of a due sense of our *own vileness*, and our infinite distance from him in nature and condition; *carnal boldness* in a customary performance of a sacred duty, under a neglect of endeavoring to exercise all grace in them, which God abhors. Wherefore, (*αἰδώς, pudor spiritualis*) what we render *reverence*, is an "holy abasement of soul in divine worship, in a sense of the majesty of God and our own vileness, with our infinite distance from him," Ezra ix, 6; Dan. ix, 7. And (*εὐλαβεία*) that which we render *godly fear* is, "a religious awe on the soul in holy duties, from a consideration of the great danger there is of sinful miscarriages in the worship of God, and of his severity against such sins and offences." Hereby the soul is moved and excited to spiritual care and diligence, not to provoke so great, so holy and jealous a God, by a neglect of that exercise of grace he requires in his service, which is due to him on account of his glorious excellencies.

§7. "For our God is a consuming fire." The words are taken from Deut. iv, 24; where they are used by Moses, to deter the people from *idols* or graven images in the worship of God; for this is a sin that God will by no means bear with. And the same description of his divine Majesty is applied here by the apostle, to the *want of grace*, reverence, and fear, in that

worship which he hath appointed; for if we are graceless in our persons; devoid of *reverence* by godly fear in our duties, God will deal with us even as with them who worship him after their own idolatrous devisings.

There is a *metaphor* in the expression; for as vehement fire will *consume* and devour whatever combustible matter is thrown into it; so will God, with a fiery terror, consume and destroy such as are guilty of the sin here prohibited. And he is called herein *our God*; as in Moses to the people, the Lord *thy God*. All covenant relation to him is in both places intimated. Wherefore, although we have a firm persuasion that he is *our God* in covenant; yet it is his will, that we should have holy apprehensions of his greatness and terrors towards sinners. See 2 Cor. v, 10, 11.

Two things are represented in this expression—"a consuming fire."

1. The *holiness and purity* of God's nature, with his severity and *vindictive justice*. From them it is, that he will consume impenitent sinners, such as have no interest in the atonement, even as fire consumes that which is cast into it.

2. His *jealousy*, with reference to his worship, as declared in the second commandment. So it is added, in that place of Moses, "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a *jealous God*." This title God first gave himself, with respect to his instituted worship, Exod. xx, 5. And this affection or property of *jealousy* is figuratively ascribed to God by an *anthropopathy*. In *men*, it is a vehement affection and inclination, arising from an apprehension, that any others should have an interest in, or possess that which they judge ought to be *peculiar* to themselves; and it hath place principally in the state of marriage, or that which is in order thereto. It is, therefore, supposed, that the

covenant between God and the church hath the nature of a *marriage covenant*, wherein he calleth himself the husband thereof, and saith, that he is married to it, Isa. liv, 5; Jer. iii, 14. In this state it is religious worship, both as to the *outward form* in divine institution, and its *inward form* of faith and grace, which God requires, as wholly his own. With reference, therefore, to defects and miscarriages therein, he assumeth that affection, and calleth himself a "jealous God." And because this is a vehement burning affection, God is said, on the account of it, to be a "consuming fire."

§8. And we may *observe*;

1. That the privileges which believers receive by the gospel, are inconceivable. They are a kingdom, the kingdom of God, or of Christ; a spiritual heavenly kingdom, replenished with inexhaustible treasures of spiritual blessings and advantages.

2. Believers are not to be measured by their *outward* state and appearance of things in the world; but by the interest they have in that kingdom, which it is their Father's pleasure to give them.

3. It is assuredly their duty in all things to behave themselves as becomes those who receive such privileges and dignity from God himself.

4. The obligation from hence to the duty of serving God, as here described, is evident and unavoidable. Those on whom it hath not an efficacy, have no real interest in this privilege, whatever they may pretend.

5. Spiritual things and mercies do constitute the most glorious kingdom in the world, even the kingdom of God.

6. This is the only kingdom that can never be moved, and it never shall be, however hell and the world rage against it.

§9. 1. While God takes us near to himself in covenant, whereby he is *our God*, he requires, that we always retain due apprehensions of the *holiness* of his nature, the severity of his *justice* against sinners, and his ardent *jealousy* concerning his worship.

2. The consideration of these things, and the dread of being, by guilt, obnoxious to their terrible consuming effects, ought to influence our minds to due reverence and godly fear in all acts of divine worship.

3. We may learn, how great our care and diligence about serving God ought to be, which are pressed on us by the Holy Ghost, from the consideration, of the greatness of the privilege, on the one hand, our receiving the kingdom; with the dreadful destruction from God, on the other, in case of our neglect.

4. The holiness and jealousy of God, which are a cause of insupportable terror to convinced sinners, have towards believers only a gracious influence to promote fear and reverence, causing them to cleave to him more firmly.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### VERSE 1.

*Let brotherly love continue.*

§. The apostle's heavenly wisdom and skill. §2. The chapter analyzed. §3. Brotherly love enjoined. §4. To be continued. §5. A peculiar reason for urging it upon the Hebrews. §6. Observations.

§1. **I**N this concluding chapter, the apostles gives us new instances of that divine wisdom, wherewith he was acted in writing the whole; which the apostle Peter refers to, 2 Pet. iii, 15. And it will communicate an inexpressible sense of itself to every intelligent reader, who meditates upon it with that faith and

reverence which is required in the perusal of these holy writings. He prescribes by his own example, as he also doth in most of his other epistles, the true order and method of preaching the gospel; that is, first to declare the gracious *mysteries* of it, and then to improve it to practical duties of obedience. And they will be mistaken who propose to themselves any other method, and those, most of all, who think *one part* of it enough without the other. He manifests in this method of his procedure, that it is to no purpose to deal with men about duties of obedience, before they are well fixed in the fundamental principles of faith.

§2. For the parts of the chapter, (the whole being *hortatory*) they are these:—An *injunction* of several duties, and of some with special enforcement, ver. 1—6. An exhortation to *faith* and *stability*, with a warning to avoid whatever is contrary thereto, ver. 7—12. The duties of *self-denial*, and patient bearing of the cross enforced, ver. 13, 14. A *renewed charge* of sundry duties, with respect to God, their church relation, one another, and himself, ver. 15—19. A *solemn prayer* for the accomplishment of the blessed work of divine grace in Christ towards them all, ver. 20, 21. And finally, the *conclusion* of the whole in sundry particulars.

In the first part, the duties exhorted unto are:—*Brotherly love*, ver. 1; *Hospitality*, ver. 2; *Compassion* towards those that suffer for the gospel, ver. 3; *Chastity*, with the nature and use of marriage; and *Contentment*, with the grounds and reasons of it, ver. 5, 6.

§3. “Let brotherly love continue,” or abide constant. Love is the fountain and foundation of all mutual duties, *moral* and *ecclesiastical*; wherefore it is here placed at the heads of both. All love is founded in *relation*. Where there is relation there ought to be love; and where there is no relation, there can

be no love, properly so called Every one by the law of nature, is every one's neighbor; and every one's brother, his keeper and helper. Wherefore all strife, envy, hatred, wrong, oppression, and bloodshed among mankind, is of the evil one, 1 John iii, 12. There is love, therefore, due to *all mankind*, to be exercised as opportunity and circumstances require. We are *to do good to all men*, 1 Thes. v, 15; and where this *love* is wanting in any, (and alas! is it not wanting in most?) there dwells *no real virtue* in that mind. But *this brotherhood* is *religious*. All believers have one Father; one elder Brother, who is not ashamed to call them brethren; they have one spirit, and are called in one hope of their calling; which, being a spirit of adoption, interesteth them all in the same family, whereby they become joint heirs with Christ: see Expos. on chap. iii, ver. 1. This is the "brotherhood" principally intended in the duty of love here prescribed. For although there was a *natural* relation also among these Hebrews, yet it was originally from their coalescency into one *sacred society*, by virtue of their covenant with God, that they became brethren of one family, distinct from all others in the world. And this relation was not dissolved, but farther *confirmed* by their interest in the gospel; whence they became "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," chap. iii, 1. Next to faith in Jesus Christ, and the profession thereof, the life and beauty of Christian religion consists in the *mutual love* of them, who are partakers of the same heavenly calling. And in vain shall men wrangle and contend about their differences in opinions, faith, and worship, pretending to design the advancement of religion, by an imposition of their persuasion, on others, without attempting to introduce again this of *holy love* among all those who profess the name Christ.



§4. The manner of the prescription of this duty is, that it should "*continue*," or *abide constant*; for he supposes it was *already in them*, and exercised by them. He seems to intimate the difficulty there is in the preservation of this grace, and the performance of this duty. It is not merely, "let it continue," but take care that it be *preserved*; for many occasions will be apt to weaken and impair it; such as differences in opinion and practice about things in religion; unsuitableness of natural tempers and inclinations; readiness to receive a sense of appearing provocations; different, and sometimes inconsistent, secular interests; an abuse of spiritual gifts, by pride on the one hand, or envy on the other; or attempts for domination inconsistent in a fraternity; which are all to be assiduously watched against.

§5. It is not improbable, but that the apostle might also have a respect to the especial conditions of those Hebrews. They had all rational foundations of mutual love among them from the beginning, in that they were all of one common natural stock; and all united in the same sacred covenant. Hereon they had many divine commands for mutual love, and the exercise of all its effects, as became a natural and religious fraternity. Accordingly they had an intense love towards all those, who, on these accounts, were their *brethren*. But in process of time they corrupted this, as all other divine institutions. For their teachers instructed them, that the meaning of the command for mutual love, included a permission, if not a command, to *hate* all others. So they *interpreted* the law of love; Lev. xix, 18, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy," Matt. v, 43. And the people practised accordingly, not thinking themselves obliged to shew the least kindness to any but

their own countrymen. Hereon they grew infamous in the world. But whereas, by the gospel, their original brotherhood was as it were dissolved; the Gentiles being taken into the same sacred communion with them, some of them might suppose, that the obligation to mutual love, which they were before under, was now also ceased. This the apostle warns them against, giving in charge, that the *same love* should still continue in all its exercise; but yet with respect to that *new fraternity*, which was constituted by the gospel.

§6. Hence observe;

1. We are especially to watch for the preservation of those graces, and the performance of those duties, which in our circumstances are most exposed to opposition. In particular,

2. Brotherly love is very apt to be impaired, and decay, if we endeavor not continually its preservation and revival. And,

3. It is a part of the wisdom of faith, to consider aright, the ways and occasions of the decay of mutual love, with the means of its preservation: without this we cannot comply with the caution and injunction in a due manner.

#### VERSE 2.

*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

§1. Hospitality urged. §2. A peculiar reason for it. §3. The manner of prescribing it. §4, 5. The advantage some have found by it. §6. Observations.

§1. **T**HE duty prescribed is "the entertaining of strangers." The original word (*Φιλοξενια*) hath respect not so much to the exercise of the duty itself, as to the *disposition*, readiness, and frame of mind, which it requires, Hence the *Syriac* properly renders it; "The

*love of strangers;*" but it is such a love as is effectual, and whose proper exercise consisteth in their *entertainment*; which compriseth the help and relief, which strangers stand in need of, and which is the proper effect of love towards them. Hence we render it "to *entertain strangers*;" that is, the receiving of them into our houses, with all necessary accommodations, as their occasions require. It is granted, that prudence and care is to be used, that we be not imposed on by such as are unworthy <sup>of</sup> any entertainment. But it doth not follow, that therefore we should refuse all who are strangers indeed; that is, whose circumstances we know not, but from themselves. It must also be acknowledged that whereas provision is now made in all civilized nations, for the entertainment of strangers, though at their own cost, things are somewhat altered from what they were in the younger days of the world.

§2. But there was a peculiar reason for prescribing this duty, taken from the then present circumstances of the church, especially of the Hebrews in their dispersions; for the church was then under great *persecution* in sundry places whereby believers were scattered from their own habitations and countries, Acts. viii, 1; and hereon, following the direction of our blessed Savior, when they were persecuted in one city, they fled to another; to other parts and places wherein they were strangers. Again; at that time there were sundry persons, especially of the converted Hebrews, who went up and down from one city, yea, one nation unto another, on their own cost and charges, to preach the gospel: "They went forth for the sake of Christ, (to preach the gospel) taking nothing of the Gentiles," to whom they preached, 3 John 7; and these were only *brethren*, and not officers of any

church, ver. 5. Such as these the apostle recommends to their love and charity in a peculiar manner. And he who is not ready to receive and entertain such persons, will manifest how little concernment he hath in the gospel, or the glory of Christ himself.

§3. The manner of the prescription of this duty is expressed in that word (*μη επιλανθανεσθε*) *be not forgetful*; be not unmindful of it. There is no doubt but that a *positive command* is included in the prohibition, "Forget not;" that this is, *remember*. This intimates that it is one of those duties to which our minds ought always to be engaged by an especial remembrance, and against which many pretences are apt to be used, for a countenance of their omission. Unless the mind be preserved in a constant disposition to the duty, we shall fail assuredly in particular cases. "The liberal *deviseth* liberal things," Isa. xxxii, 8. The mind is to be disposed and inclined *habitually* to prudent liberality, or it will not embrace occasions of doing liberal things.

§4. The next thing in the words is, the *advantage* that some formerly had received by a diligent observance of this duty: "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares;" (*δια ταυτης γαρ*) *for thereby*; by this virtue inclining the mind to the entertainment of strangers, some had their privilege of receiving *angels* under the appearance of *strangers*. Had they not been so *disposed*, they had neglected the opportunity of so great a favor. So the mind, inlaid with virtue and grace, is equally prepared to perform duties, and to receive privileges. (*Τινες*) *some*; as Abraham and Lot, Gen. xviii, 1, 2, &c. and Gen. xix, 12; who, no doubt, are referred to in a special manner. Yet I dare not ascribe it to them alone, exclusive of all others; for I question not but that, in those ancient

times, wherein God so much used the ministry of angels about the church, sundry other believers were visited by them "unawares" in like manner, as being disposed to receive this privilege by their readiness on all occasions to entertain strangers. But the instances left on sacred record are sufficient to the apostle's purpose. Now this reception of angels was a great honor to them that receive them, and so intended of God; wherein lies the force of the reason for diligence in this duty. How could they have any greater honor, than for glorious angels to abide and converse with them? But the *motive* here used does not consist in this, that we also in the discharge of this duty may receive angels as they did, nor are we hereby encouraged to expect any such thing; but he shews hereby how *acceptable* to God this duty is, and how highly it is *honored*; whereon we may in the discharge of the same duty hope for divine approbation, in whatever way it seems good to our divine Sovereign.

§5. This they did (ελαβον) *unawares*. It is observed, that on the appearance of these angels to Abraham in the heat of the day, he sat in the door of his tent, Gen. xviii, 1; and at their appearance to Lot in the evening, he sat in the gate of Sodom where strangers were to enter, Gen. xix, 1; probably both of them at those seasons had so disposed themselves *on purpose*, that if they saw any strangers, they might invite and receive them. *Unawares*; not knowing them *at first* to be angels, though afterwards they knew; and this may be laid in the balance against all those fears and scruples which are apt to arise in our minds about the entertainment of strangers, that they are not *so good* as they appear or pretend to be; seeing some were *so much better* and more honorable than what at first they seemed to be.

§6. *Observe* hence,

1. Our hearts are not to be trusted to in occasional duties, if not preserved in a continual disposition towards them; if *that* be lost, no argument will be prevalent to engage them to present occasions.

2. The mind ought continually to be upon its watch, and in a gracious disposition towards such duties as are attended with difficulties and charge.

3. Examples of privileges annexed to duties, (whereof the scripture is full) are great motives and incentives to the like duties.

4. Faith will make use of the highest privileges that ever were enjoyed in the performance of duties to encourage to obedience, though it expects not any thing of the *same kind*, or the performance of the same duties.

5. When men, designing that which is good, do *more good* than they intended, they shall reap *more benefit* thereby than they expected.

VERSE 3.

*Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

§1. Of brotherly love towards sufferers. §2. Particularly prisoners. §3. What implied in remembering them. §4. And them who suffer adversity. §5. A motive to it subjoined. §6, 7. Observations.

§1. **T**HE first branch of the exercise of brotherly love enjoined was towards *strangers*; the next is towards *sufferers*; that is, who suffered *for the gospel*. These were in a twofold outward condition; some in prisons or bonds, and some variously troubled in their names, reputation, goods, and enjoyments; some deprived of all, and all of some of these things.

§2. (*Των δεσμιων*) of those that are bound; any that are in prison, whether actually bound with chains or

no, because all prisoners were *usually* so bound, Acts, xvi, 26; this was esteemed a thing shameful as well as penal; for it was the state of evil doers. But the "word of God," as the apostle speaks, "is not bound," 2 Tim. ii, 9; the devil was never able, by this means, to obscure the light, or stop the progress of the gospel; he and his agents do but labor in vain. Men may, but the word of God cannot be bound.

§3. The duty enjoined with respect to those that are bound is, that we (μνησθε) *remember* them, or be *mindful* of them. It seems those that are at liberty, are apt to *forget* Christ's prisoners; and we are desired so to remember or think of them, as to *relieve* them according to our ability. It implies—a *care* about their persons and concerns, as opposed to that regardlessness which is apt to possess the minds of those that are at ease, and, as they suppose, free from danger; *compassion* towards them, as if bound with them: the want of it is expressed as a great aggravation of the sufferings of our Savior himself; Psal. lxix, 20, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." *Prayer*, as in the case of Peter when he was in bonds, Acts xii, 5. *Assisting* them as to what may be wanting to their relief. To *supply their wants* according to our ability. *Visiting* them, which the Lord Jesus Christ calls the visiting of himself in person, Matt. xxv, 36—43. Where this attention to suffering saints is not, it argues a great decay in the power of religion; and there are none more severely reflected on, than those who are at ease while the church is in affliction, Psal. cxxiii, 4 Zech. i, 15.

§4. But that we may not suppose our love and duty to be *confined* to these alone, he adds all that undergo trouble of any sort for the profession of the gospel;

“and them which *suffer adversity*.” all that is adverse or grievous to us, as sickness, pain, losses, want, and poverty, reproaches, contempt, scorn, turning out of secular employments, spoiling of goods, stigmatizing, taking away of children, banishment, every thing which we may undergo in and for our profession.

§5. The motive added to the diligent discharge of the duty enjoined, is, That “we ourselves are also in the body.” Were you indeed, as if the apostle had said, once freed from the body, none of these things could reach you; but whereas you are in the same state of natural life with them, equally exposed to all the sufferings which they undergo, be they of what kind they will, and have no assurance that you shall always be exempted from them, this ought to be a motive to you to be mindful of them in their present sufferings. This, I perceive, is the sense of the place.

§6. And we may observe from hence;

1. Bonds and imprisonment for the truth were consecrated to God, and made honorable, by the bonds and imprisonment of Christ himself; and commended to the church in all ages by those of the apostle and primitive witnesses of the truth.

2. It is better, more safe and honorable, to be in bonds for Christ, than to be at liberty with a brutish, raging, persecuting world.

3. Whilst God is pleased to give grace and courage to some to suffer for the gospel unto bonds, and to others to perform the duty here recommended towards them, the church will be no loser by suffering.

4. When some are tried as to their constancy in bonds, others are tried as to their sincerity in the discharge of the duties required of them on such occasions. And,



5. Usually more fail in the neglect of their duty towards sufferers, and so fall from their profession, than do so fail under their sufferings.

§7. 1. Although there are peculiar duties required of us towards those who suffer for the gospel in bonds, yet we are not hereon discharged from the same kind of duties towards those who suffer in lesser degrees. And,

2. Not only those who are in bonds for the gospel, or suffer in an high degree in their persons, are under the special care of Christ, but those also who suffer on the same account in any other kind whatever, though the world may take little notice of them; and therefore they are all commended to our special remembrance.

3. Professors of the gospel are exempted from no sorts of adversity, from nothing that is evil and grievous to the outward man in this world; and therefore we ought not to think it strange when we fall into them.

4. That we have no security of freedom from any sort of suffering for the gospel whilst we are in the body, or during the continuance of our natural lives. Heaven is the only state of everlasting rest. Whilst we have our bodily eyes, all tears will not be wiped from them.

5. We are not only exposed to afflictions during this life, but we ought to live in the continual expectation of them, so long as there are any in the world who actually suffer for the gospel. Not to expect *our share* in trouble and persecution, is a sinful security proceeding from very corrupt principles of mind.

6. A sense of *our* being continually obnoxious to sufferings, no less than those who actually suffer, ought to incline our minds to a diligent consideration of them in their sufferings, so as to discharge all duties of love and helpfulness towards them.

7. Unless we do so, we can have no evidence of our present interest in the same mystical body with them; nor just expectation of any compassion or relief from others, when we ourselves are called to sufferings. What a severe self-reflection must we charge ourselves with for want of due compassion for those who were in that condition before us!

## VERSE 4.

*Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

§1. Occasion and design of the words. §2. Exposition. *Marriage is honorable in all.* §3. *And the bed undefiled.* §4. The dreadful doom of whoremongers and adulterers. §5, 6. Observations.

§1. **T**HIS declaration refers, undoubtedly, to some principles and practices that were then current in the world. And these were, that *marriage* was at least burthensome, and a kind of bondage to some men, especially an hinderance to them that were contemplative, and that fornication was at least a thing indifferent, which men might allow themselves in, though *adultery* were to be condemned. In opposition to these cursed principles and practices, the apostle, designing to commend and enjoin *chastity* to all professors of the gospel, declares, on the one side, the honorable state of matrimony from divine institution; and on the other, the wickedness of that lasciviousness wherein they allowed themselves, with the certainty of divine vengeance which would befall them who continued in it. There was just reason, therefore, why the apostle should insinuate the prescription of the duty intended by a declaration of the *honor* of that state which God had appointed for the preservation of chastity. See 1 Tim. iv, 3.

§2. The preposition (*ex*) when applied to *persons*, is constantly used in the New Testament for (*inter*) *among*; Beza, (*inter quosvis*) *among all*, that is, *all sorts of persons*. The apostle doth not assert that marriage was a thing *in good reputation* among all men, Jews and Gentiles, but that it is *honorable* in all sorts of persons, who enter into it according to the law of God and righteous laws among men. For by a defect herein it may be rendered highly *dishonorable*.

Again; it must be a marriage of two individual persons, and *no more*, according to the law of creation and divine institution, (for *polygamy* was never honorable;) it must not be of persons within the degrees of consanguinity laid under divine prohibition, (*incest* being no less dishonorable than adultery;) there must also be a concurrence of all necessary circumstances both of mind and body in the married; such as have power over their own persons, freedom in choice or consent, personal mutual vow or contract, natural meetness for the duties of marriage, and the like. Wherefore *that marriage is honorable*, which, on the ground and warranty of divine institution, is "a lawful conjunction of one man and one woman by their just and full consent, into an indissoluble union, (whereby they become one flesh) for the procuration of children; and mutual assistance in all things divine and human." I shall only add, that as the legitimate and orderly continuation of the human race depends hereon, so whatever is of virtue, honor, comeliness, or order amongst men; whatever is praiseworthy and useful in all societies economical, ecclesiastical or political, proceeds from the principle here asserted. All to whom children are dear, relations useful, inheritances valuable, and God's approbation is preferred to sordid un-

cleanness and eternal ruin, ought to account this state *honorable*.

Nor is there any sort, order or degree of men, by reason of any calling, work, or employment, but that marriage is an honorable state to them. This is the plain sense of the words. However, if the phrase (*ἐν παντί*) should be rendered "*in all things*," or every manner of way, the *popish* notion of celibacy can never escape the force of this divine testimony against it. For, is it lawful for them to esteem and call that so *vile*, as to be unmeet for some order or sort of men among them, which God hath declared to be *honorable* "*in all things*" "*or every manner of way*?" I shall only say, that their impiety in imposing the necessity of single life on all their *ecclesiastics*, wherein they have usurped divine authority over the consciences of men, hath been openly pursued by divine vengeance, in giving it up to be an occasion of multiplying such horrid uncleannesses as have been scandalous to the Christian religion, and ruinous to the souls of millions.

§3. To the state of marriage, the apostle adds the consideration of the *duties* of it in that expression, (*κοῖτη κεκαυλωτος*) *the bed undefiled*. And two things are here intended:—the honorable state of marriage as opposed to the defiled bed of whoremongers and adulterers; and—the preservation of marriage duties within their due bounds, 1 Thes. iv, 3—5; 1 Cor. vii, 2—5; for, in that respect, there may be many pollutions even of the marriage bed.

From this state and use of marriage—the means appointed of God for the preservation of the purity and chastity of our persons—the aggravation of the contrary sin is enormous. Who can express the detestable wickedness of forsaking those divine appointments, in contempt of the authority and wisdom of God, by

any seeking the satisfaction of their lusts in ways injurious to others, debasing and defiling to themselves? Yes, they disturb the whole order of nature and drown themselves in everlasting perdition.

§4. "But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The distinction between (*πορνας* and *μοιχας*) *whoremongers* and *adulterers*, is allowed by all to be this; that the former are *single persons*; and the latter are those who are both, or else one of them in a *married* state. The sin of the first is fornication, of the other, adultery; although the words (*πορνειν* and *πορνεια*) may sometimes be used to denote any uncleanness in general, and so to comprise adultery also. Some have fallen into that degree of imprudence in our days, as to countenance themselves with the opinion and practices of some of the heathen, who thought that fornication was no sin, or a matter not much to be regarded. But shall we suppose that our holy religion, which condemneth our *inward lusting* of the heart after a woman without any outward act as a sin worthy of judgment, gives countenance to, or rather doth not most severely condemn actual fornication? It is to be feared that if magistrates and those who are public ministers in the nation, do not take more care than hitherto hath been used, for the restraint of this raging abomination, divine judgments on the whole nation, on its account will speedily satisfy men's scruples, whether it be a *sin* or no.

For *adulterers*, who are mentioned in the next place, there is no question amongst any about the heinousness of *their* sin; and the common interest of mankind keeps up a detestation of it. But it is here, together with fornication, reserved in a peculiar manner to *divine* vengeance, because for the most part it is kept secret, and so free from human cognizance,

and because—although the *divine law* made it punishable by death, yet—for the most part it ever passes in the world under a less severe punishment.

But whatever such persons think of themselves, or others think of them, “God (*κρίνει*) will judge” and condemn them, at the final judgment of the great day; they shall not be acquitted, but (having persisted in their detestable practice) they shall be eternally damned. And there is an *emphasis* in the expression, “God will judge;” wherein we may see, that the special aggravations of these sins expose men to a sore condemnation in a peculiar manner, 1 Cor. iii, 17; vi, 16—19. Although the state of men may be changed; and divine wrath due to those sins be finally escaped by repentance; yet it may be observed, that those who are habitually given up to these lusts of the flesh are of all others the most rarely brought to effectual repentance.

§5. And we may observe,

1. Divine institution is sufficient to render any state or condition of life *honorable*.

2. The more useful any state of life is, the more honorable it is; the honor of marriage arises much from its usefulness.

3. That which is honorable by divine institution, and useful in its own nature, may be abused and rendered vile by the miscarriages of men.

4. It is a bold usurpation of authority over the consciences of men, and contempt of the authority of God, to forbid that state to any which God hath declared honorable to all.

5. Means for chastity and purity not ordained, nor sanctified to that end, will prove fartherances of impurity and uncleanness, or worse evils.

6. The state of marriage being honorable in the sight of God himself, it is the duty of them that enter

thereinto duly to consider how they may approve their consciences to God in what they do.

§6. 1. Conjugal duties regulated by the bounds assigned them by natural light, with the general rules of scripture, and subservient to the due ends of marriage, are honorable, giving no cause of pollution or shame.

2. Whatever slight thoughts men may have of sin, *any sin*, the judgment of God, which is according to truth, must stand for ever. To have slight thoughts of sin, will prove no relief to sinners.

3. Fornication and adultery are deserving of eternal damnation. If the due wages of *all sin* be death, much more of so great abominations.

4. Men living and dying impenitently in these sins; shall eternally perish; or an habitual course in them is utterly inconsistent with any spark of saving grace. See Ephes. v, 5; 1 Tim. i, 10; Rev. xxi, 8; xxi, 15.

#### VERSES 5, 6.

*Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

§1. Transition from particular duties to what is more general. The Christian's universal walk before God; which should be without covetousness. §2. With contentment. §3, 4. Enforced by a divine promise. §5. The apostle's inference. §6, 7. Observations.

§1. **F**ROM particular duties the apostle proceeds to that which is more general, which relates to our whole course of walking with God. Our "*conversation*" here includes both the frame of our minds, and the moral manner of our acting, in all that we do about the things pertaining to this life; and because of this restriction of it to our actings about the things of *this life*, the apostle useth the word (τροπος, *mos*, or *mores*) *custom*, and not the other word (αναρροφη) which ex-

presseth our *universal walk* with God, in all holy obedience, Phil. i, 27; iii, 20; Jam. iii, 13; 1 Pet. i, 15; 2 Pet. iii, 11; the ordering of our *conversation* aright in this matter is of great importance in our Christian profession; and for the direction of it the apostle gives this rule, that it be (*αφιλαργυρια*) *without covetousness*. *Covetousness* (*φιλαργυρια*) is an inordinate desire and endeavor after the enjoyment of more riches than we have, or that God is pleased to give us, proceeding from an undue valuation of them or love to them, 1 Tim. vi, 6—10; a vice this, which, by its effects, manifests itself always to be contrary to the light of nature, as debasing the minds of men, making them useless, and exposing them to all manner of vile practices; hence it was always stigmatized by sober heathens, as one of the vilest affections of the human mind; and there is nothing which the scripture more severely condemns, or upon which it denounces more inevitable punishment. *Covetousness* is *idolatry*, Col. iii, 5; but hereof there are many degrees; where it is predominant, the scripture absolutely excludes those in whom it is from life and salvation, amongst the most profligate sinners; but there may be smaller degrees of inordinate desires after earthly things, in believers, which are a subject of mortification all their days: when men are spoiled of their goods, and in danger of losing all, it is apt to stir up in them earnest and inordinate desires after somewhat more than they have, and not to be content with what is present, which the apostle declares to be covetousness; this he would have us to be free from at all times, especially in times of persecution; to which he plainly had respect.

§2. In opposition hereunto we are enjoined to be “content with such things as we have;” without *complaining* or *repining* at God’s providential disposal.



of our outward concerns; without *envy* at the more prosperous condition of others; without *fears* and anxious cares about future supplies; and without desires and designs of those things which a more plentiful condition than what we are in would supply us with; this contentment is with respect to (τοις παροσιν) "*such things as are present*;" as opposed to things which are not present with us in our present condition, and therefore denote "*such things as we have*;" yet are not *things* only intended, but in general the *state and condition* wherein we are, as of poverty, or afflictions, or persecutions, or of more enlargement in earthly things; see Phil. i, 11; and the measure of them, in ordinary cases, is *food and raiment*, as the rule is given us; 1 Tim. vi, 8, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content;" not that we are allowed to be discontented if we *want* them; but that these are such a sufficiency as may be deemed a rational obligation to contentment; but among other evils that we may undergo for the gospel, we may be called to endure *hunger* and *nakedness*, Rom. viii, 35; and we are obliged to be therewith *content*; for contentment in things present doth not arise from any measure, great or small, of the things themselves which we enjoy, but depends on the presence of God with us, and the annexed reward, as follows:

§3. "For he hath said;" *he* who alone hath all being and existence in himself; *he* who is all in all; *he* who is over all, the supreme Disposer of all things in heaven and earth, in whose hand and power are all the concerns of men, who can do whatever he pleaseth; "*he hath said it*."

"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." It is observed by all, that there is a *vehement negation* in

the latter clause, by a multiplication of the *negative particles* (*οὐδ', η, μη,*) seeing two of them are used in the former clause; the design of it is, to obviate all objections which fear and unbelief may raise against the assurance given, under a pretence of some peculiarity of circumstances; be they what they will, saith God, "I will not *at any time*, on any occasion, for any cause, leave thee or forsake thee."

In the negative expressions, *positive blessings* are contained, and those distinct also as the expressions are; by the one, the *continuance of God's presence* is intended; by the other, the *continuance of his help*; I will not *leave* thee; or withdraw my presence from thee; I will never *forsake* thee; or suffer thee to be *helpless* in any trouble.

Wherefore the vehemency of the expression, by the multiplication of the negative particles, is an effect of divine *condescension*; to give the utmost security to the faith of believers in all their trials.

§4. There is a promise to this purpose given to Solomon by David, in the name of God; "the Lord God, even my God, he will be with thee, *he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,*" 1 Chron. xxviii, 20; and it is frequently repeated to the church, as to the substance of it, see Isa. xli, 10—13; but it is generally granted, that this promise is that which God made to Joshua, when he gave him in charge the great work [of destroying the enemies of the church in the land of Canaan; Jos. i, 5, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee;" now though this promise was *personal*, and given to Joshua on account of that great and difficult undertaking; yet—seeing the dangers and difficulties which every believer is to undergo in the spiritual warfare, especially in times of persecution and extraordinary trials, are no less than those that Joshua underwent in his

wars; and seeing they stand in no less need of the special presence and assistance of God to overcome them, than he did—God thereby expressly declared how he will deal with *all believers* in every state and condition that he calls them to; their faith stands in need of the same support, the same encouragement with that of Joshua, and it is resolved into the same principles—the presence and assistance of God; wherefore, all the promises made to the church, and every particular member of it for the use of the church, are made *equally to the whole church*, and every member of it, in every age, according as the grace and mercies of it are suited to their state and condition; herein then lieth the force of the apostle's argument; that if God hath said unto *every one of us*, what he said to Joshua,—that he will never leave us as to his *presence*, nor forsake us as to his "*assistance*"—we have sufficient ground to cast away all inordinate desires of earthly things, all fears of want and other pressures, and to rest quiet and contented with his undertaking for us.

§5. "So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me;" we may every one of us say, as David did in the like case, and in his confidence of the same promise of the divine *presence and assistance* that is given also to us; Psal. cxviii, 6, "The Lord is on my side," (*for me*, my helper) I will not fear; what can man do unto me? To the same purpose the Psalmist speaks, Psal. lvi, 3, 4, 11:

"So that we may boldly say;" by what is said to us we are enabled and justified thus to say ourselves; *boldly*, (*θαρρυντας ημας*) *we being bold*, using confidence; to intimate our *duty* on this occasion, which is to cast out all fears, every thing that might *intimidate* our spirits, or disquiet our minds, or hinder us from making

our cheerful profession of our confidence in God; for we are (*λεγειν*) *to say* what we believe, yea, to glory and make our boast in God against all opposition.

In the *application* of this testimony, Psal. lvi, 4; the apostle supposeth that David spoke these words in the person of the *whole church*, or on the general right of all true believers; for having the same grounds of it that he had, they may use the same confidence that he did, though their outward circumstances be specifically different; in whatever befalls us we may boldly say—"we will not fear;" for, if God be for us, who shall be against us?

This *help of God*, which believers are assured of in their trials, is either *internal*, by supplies of grace, spiritual strength of consolation, enabling them with a victorious frame of mind to go through all the difficulties and dangers of their conflict with certain success; or *eternal*, in actual deliverance by the destruction of their adversaries; both which are frequently exemplified in the scripture, and by more recent experience.

§6. And that which we are taught from hence, is;

1. All *covetousness* is inconsistent with a Christian conversation; nor is there any thing at this day, that doth more stain the glory of our Christian profession.

2. Covetousness, in any degree, is *highly dangerous* in a time of suffering for the gospel; for there is no sin that so intimidates the spirits and weakens all resolution, at such a time as this doth; it is always accompanied with *distrust* of God, an *over valuation* of earthly things, *anxiety* and disquietude of mind, irregular contrivances for supply, and reserves of trust in what men have, with other evils innumerable.

3. The divine *presence*, and divine *assistance*, which are inseparable, are the spring of suitable and sufficient relief to believers in every condition.

4. Especially the due consideration of them is abundantly sufficient to rebuke all *covetous* inclinations and desires, which, without it will, be prevalent in a time of straits.

5. The cheerful profession of confidence in God against all opposition, and in the midst of distresses, is what believers have a warrant for in the promises.

6. As the use of this confidence is our incumbent duty, so it is a duty highly honorable to the profession of the gospel.

§7. 1. All believers have, in their sufferings, a refreshing, supporting interest in divine aid, the promises being made to them *all equally* in their suffering state, even as they were to the prophets and apostles of old.

2. It is their duty to express with confidence and boldness, at all times, their assurance of the divine assistance declared in the promises to their own encouragement, the edification of the church, and the terror of their adversaries, Phil. i, 28.

3. Faith duly fixed on the power of God, as engaged for the assistance of believers in their sufferings, will give them a contempt of all that men can do unto them.

4. The most effectual means to encourage our souls in all our sufferings, is to compare the power of God, who will assist us, and that of man oppressing us, Matt. x, 28.

5. That which in our sufferings delivereth us from the fear of men, takes out all that is evil in them, and secures our success.

#### VERSE 7.

*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

§2. Introduction and design §3, 3. Of remembering our teachers. §4. Imitating their faith. §5. Regarding the end of their conversation, §6. Observation.

§1. **F**ROM a prescription of the forgoing duties of *morality*, the apostle proceeds to those which concern *faith and worship*, laying the foundation of them in that respect, which is due to those who declare to us the words of truth for their work's sake, and on account of the example which they give us.

That which the apostle designs in the following discourse is, perseverance in the faith, and profession of the truth, in opposition to an inclination to "various and strange doctrines," ver. 8.

§2. "Them which have the rule over you;" so Erasmus, (*eorum qui vobis præsunt*) of them who *preside over you*; but it is an evident mistake. What seems to have led into it is, that the word (*ηγουμενος*) is a *participle* of the present tense; but it is most frequently used as a *noun*, and so it is here. It is used repeatedly in this chapter, ver. 7, 17, 24; for an officer or officers in the church; that is, such as *go before* and direct it, which is the nature of their office; bishops, pastors, elders, who *preside* in the church to *guide* it; for they have such a rule as consists principally in *spiritual guidance*.

And, by the description following, it is evident, that the apostle intends all who had *preached the word of God* to them, whether apostles, evangelists as pastors, who had now finished their course.

(*Μνημονεύετε*) *remember* them; be mindful of them, so as to "esteem them very highly in love for their works sake," 1 Thes. v, 18; and the same respect we are to have for them when they have *finished their work*. Suddenly to forget them, is an evidence, that we have not profited much by their labors. We ought,

therefore, affectionately to remember them in what they did and taught, so as to follow them in their faith and conversation. Alas! how many have we had, and how many have we now, who have left, or are likely to leave, nothing to be remembered, but what it is the duty of the church to abhor! How many whose uselessness leads them into everlasting oblivion!

§3. "Who have *spoken* unto you the *word of God*." This is the *characteristic* note of church guides. Those who do not labor to the edification of the church, let them pretend what they will, are not esteemed by Christ, as acceptable guides or rulers; nor is the honorable remembrance of them any duty. "*The word of God*;" the *written* word; including the vocal speaking of persons divinely inspired by virtue of new revelations. And whereas the word of the gospel is principally intended, this speaking may comprise the *apostolical writing* also.

This "word of God" is the sole object of the church's faith; and the only outward means of communicating to it the mind and grace of God, wherefore upon it the being, life, and blessedness of the church depend.

§4. "*Whose faith follow*;" so mind them and their work in preaching the word of God, as to follow, (*μιμεσθαι*) to *imitate* them; to copy their example in a lively, expressive manner, and particularly *their faith*; the grace of faith, whereby they believed the truth, and its *exercise* in all they did and suffered. Their faith was that which purified their hearts, and made them fruitful in their lives.

§5. "Considering the end of their (*ανασποφη*) *conversation*;" the way or course of their walking and converse in the world, with respect to moral duties, and the whole of their obedience. This conversation of theirs had now received its (*ευβασις*) *end*; the word sig-

ifies an end accompanied with a deliverance from, and so a conquest over, such difficulties and dangers as they were before exposed to. These persons, in the whole course of their conversation were exercised with difficulties, dangers, and sufferings, all attempting to stop them in their way, or to turn them out of it. But what did it all amount to? what was the issue of their conflict? It was a blessed *deliverance* from all troubles, and a complete *conquest* over them. Their faith failed not, their hope did not perish, they were not disappointed; but had a blessed end of their walk and course.

This they were advised to *consider*, (*ανυθενεργητες*) not with a slight transient thought, with which we usually pass over such things, but a reiterated contemplation of the matter, with its causes and circumstances.

§6. A due consideration of the faith of those who have been before us, especially of such who were constant in sufferings; and above all, those who were so unto death, as the holy martyrs in former and latter ages, is an effectual means to stir us up to the same exercise of faith, when we are called to it. And happy had it been, if men's *imitation* of former ages had kept itself within these bounds.

VERSE 8.

*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.*

§1. The occasion of the words. §2. The Socinian gloss refuted. Expository remarks. §3. Concerning the connexion and use of the words. §4. Observations.

§1. **T**wo things are to be considered in these words; first the *occasion* of them; and then their *sense* and meaning. And as to the occasion of their use in this place,



to me they appear as a glorious light, which the apostle sets up to guide our minds in the consideration of his whole discourse, that we may see whence it all proceeds, and whereunto it tends. He is the *alpha* and *omega*, the first and the last; the beginner and the finisher of our faith.

§2. There are various *interpretations* of the words (*χθες και σημερον*) *yesterday and to day*; Eniedinus says, that by "*yesterday*" (*χθες*) a "short time before" is intended; that which was of late, *viz.* since the birth of Christ at most, which was not long before. He is followed by Schlictingius, and all the *Socinians*. But there cannot be given a more absurd interpretation; for when we say of any one, that he is of *yesterday*, (*χθες και πριν*) it is spoken of him in contempt; "we are of *yesterday*, and know nothing," Job viii, 9. But the *design* of the apostle (which is our clue) is to utter that which tends to the *honor* of Christ, and not to his *diminution*. And the scripture expressions of him to this purpose are—"He was in the beginning; he was with God; he was God," &c.

But clearly to comprehend the mind of the Holy Ghost herein, sundry things are to be observed. As,

1. That it is the *person* of Christ that it is spoken of; nor is this whole name (*Ιησους Χριστος*) *Jesus Christ*, ever used for any other purpose. It is false, therefore, that it is here taken *metonymically* for his doctrine, or for the gospel; nor, indeed, would such a sense be any way to the apostle's purpose. Yet,

2. He speaks not of his person absolutely, but with respect to his *office*, and his discharge of it, or he declares who and what he was therein.

3. It is from his divine Person, that, in the discharge of his office, he was (*αυτος*) *the same*. So it is said of him (chap. i, 12, *συ δε ο αυτος ει*) "But thou art

the same;" that is, eternal, immutable, indeficient. Wherefore,

4. There is no need to fix a determinate, distinct sense as to the notation of time to each word, "yesterday, to day, and for ever," the apostle designing, by a kind of proverbial speech, wherein respect is had to all seasons, to denote the *eternity and immutability* of Christ in them all. To the same purpose he is said to be (ο ων, και ο ην, και ο ερχομενος, Rev. i, 4,) "He who *is*, who *was*, and who *is to come*."

This then is the use of these words: "Jesus Christ, in every condition of believers, is the same to them; being always the same in his divine Person, to the consummation of all things. He is; he ever was, all and in all unto the church; the author, object, and finisher of faith; the preserver and rewarder of them that believe in all generations."

§8. Our last inquiry is concerning the *connexion* and use of these words, with reference to the other parts of the discourse. In the preceding verse (for we have no reason to look higher in this *series* of duties independent one of the other) the Hebrews are enjoined to persevere in imitating the faith of their first apostolical teachers. Now whereas *they* had by their faith a *victorious end* of their whole conversation, they might consider, that Jesus Christ, who is always the same in himself, would likewise be the same to them, to give them the like blessed end of *their* faith and obedience. As he was when they believed in him, so he is now. And here a rule is fixed for the trial of doctrines, *viz.* the acknowledgment of Christ in his person and office; which in the like case is given us by the apostle John, 1 Epist. iv, 2, 3. Let this foundation be laid; whatever agrees with it is true and genuine, what doth not agree with it is *various* and *strange*

doctrine. And as to the other part of the exhortation; to what end, saith the apostle, should men trouble themselves with the distinction of *meats*, and the like Mossaical observances; whereas in the time they were enjoined, they were *in themselves* of no advantage; for it was Christ alone, that even then was all to the church, as to its acceptance with God. And so I hope we have restored these words to their genuine sense and use.

§4. Hence *observe*;

1. The due consideration of Jesus Christ, especially in his eternity, immutability, and indeficiency, or as he is *always the same*, is the great encouragement of believers in their whole profession, and all difficulties.

2. As no changes formerly made in the institutions of divine worship, altered any thing in the faith of the church, with respect to Christ; for he was, and is still the same; so no vicissitudes we may meet with in our profession, by oppression or persecution, ought in the least to shake us; for Christ is still the same to protect, relieve, and deliver us.

3. He that can in the way of his duty, on all occasions, retreat to Jesus Christ, and the due consideration of his person in the discharge of his office, will not fail of relief, support, and consolation.

4. A steadfast cleaving to the truth, concerning the *person and office* of Christ, will preserve us from harkening to various and strange doctrines perverting our souls.

5. Jesus Christ, from the beginning of the world, was the object of the church's faith. And,

6. It is the *immutability* and eternity of Jesus Christ in his divine person, that render him a meet object of faith to the church, in the discharge of his office.

VERSE 9.

*Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.*

§1. The apostle's design explained in several expository remarks, which contain an analysis of his discourse. §2. Exposition. Various and strange doctrines, what. §3. The exhortation not to be carried about with them. §4. The end to be aimed at in professing religion is, to be established. §5. Which is not to be done by the Jewish altar and ceremonies, but by grace. §6. The unprofitableness of the former. §7. Observations.

§1. **T**HE ensuing context from hence to the 17th verse seems *abstruse*, and the reasoning not easy to be apprehended; but expositors generally overlook it, and attend only to the exposition of the *parts*. To find out the mind of the Holy Ghost in the whole, we must consider the *design* of the apostle in it, and how he adduces one thing from another.

1. There was at this time not only an obstinate *adherence* to Mosaical ceremonies amongst many of the Jews, who yet professed the gospel; but also an endeavor to reinforce their *necessity*, and to impose their observance upon others.

2. He adds a *reason* of this *dehortation* and warning, by pointing out the *inconsistency* of these Mosaic ceremonies with the *gospel*, with the very nature of the Christian religion, and that great principle of it, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." To this end he supposeth,

1. That the spring of all their observances about *meats*, eating or not eating, and consequently of the other rites of the same nature, was from the *altar*; for with respect to this was the determination of things clean and unclean; what might be offered on the altar was *clean*, and what might not, was *unclean*.

2. That the foundation of religion lies in *an altar*; but that ours is not of such a nature as that from thence any distinction of meats should ensue.

3. That whatever be the *benefits* of our altar, the way of their participation is not the administration of the old tabernacle services; nor could they who administered therein claim a right to them by any divine institution. Nay, if they *rested* in *that administration*, they were excluded from them.

4. He adds the reason of this excluding maxim taken from the *nature of our altar* and sacrifice; for it is a sacrifice of *expiation* to sanctify the people by blood; and even in the very *type* of it; the blood of the victims being carried into the holy place, their bodies were burned entirely without the camp; so that the priests themselves had no right to eat any thing of them.

5. In answer thereto the Lord Jesus Christ, who is himself both our *altar*, *sacrifice*, and *priest*, carried his own blood, in its atoning efficacy, into the holy place of heaven, having suffered in his body without the gate, where the sacrifices were burned. So that there is no place now left for *eating*, or distinction of meats. Yea,

6. Hereby a *new state of religion*, answerable to the nature of the altar and sacrifice, is introduced; with which the tabernacle observances, which depended on the nature and the use of the altar, were *utterly inconsistent*. Wherefore, whoever adhered to *them*, did thereby renounce this *altar* of ours and consequently the *religion* founded thereon; for none can have an interest in *two* altars, at the same time, of such different natures, and which draw after them such different religious observances.

7. He adds, in the last place, what we are to learn from the nature and use of our altar and sacrifice, in opposition to the *meats* which belonged to the old typical altar; and herein he instanceth in patient bearing of the cross or *suffering* for Christ, ver. 13. *Self-denial*, as to temporal enjoyments, ver. 14; continual *divine worship*, which is a spiritual sacrifice made acceptable in Christ, our altar, priest, and sacrifice, ver. 15; and all *good works* of piety and charity towards men. These are the only sacrifices we are now called to offer. I hope we have not missed the apostle's design and reasoning in this analysis of his discourse, which makes his sublime way of arguing this great mystery plain and evident; and gives us a safe rule for the interpretation of every particular part of it.

§2. "Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines.

It is evident that the doctrines intended were such as did then infest the churches, the Hebrew churches; which is manifest in the special instance given about meats. And they are called "*various*," because they were not reducible to that *one faith*, which was once delivered to the saints, and which was quite of another kind; because they had no consistency or agreement among themselves; and especially they were various from their *object*, seeing they were about various things. Or he calls them "*various*," because they took the mind from its proper stability, tossing it up and down at all uncertainties. When once men begin to give ear to such doctrines, they lose all the rest and composure of their minds, as we see by daily experience.

And they are "*strange*," as being concerning things *foreign* to the gospel, uncompliant with the nature and genius of it. Such are all doctrines about religious

ceremonies, and the over scrupulous observance of them; for the kingdom of God is not "meat and drink," but righteousness and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv, 17.

§3. With respect to those doctrines the charges are, "Be not carried about" with them, see Ephes. iv, 14. There is an allusion to ships, and the impression of the mind upon them. In themselves they are light, and are easily carried about of winds; and the false doctrines may be compared to winds, because those who would impose them on others, commonly do it with a great and vehement *blustering*. You must be circumcised, or you cannot be saved, as Acts xv, 1; unless you believe and practise these things, you are *heretics* and *schismatics*, &c. and the effects of them on the minds of some are those of contrary winds at sea; they toss them up and down; they run them out of their course; and threaten their destruction. First, they fill the minds of men with *uncertainties*, as to what they have *believed*; and then for the most part they alter the whole course of their profession; and lastly, they bring them to be in danger of eternal ruin. In proof of these things, witness the Galatian churches.

§4. The end to be aimed at, in the profession of religion is, "that the heart be (βεβαιωθῇ) *established*; so confirmed in faith, as to have a *fixed persuasion* of the truth; or a just firm settlement of mind in the assurance of it, as opposed to being *tossed to and fro*; that through the truth, the heart enjoy *peace with God*, which alone will establish it; giving it firmitude and rest in every condition, being stayed on God.

§5. (Χαρίτι) *by grace*. "Grace" here is to be taken comprehensively, for the good will and love of God towards men, by Jesus Christ, as revealed in the gospel. This is that alone which doth, which can estab-

lish the heart of a sinner in peace with a holy and just God, Rom. v, 1.

“Not with meats.” Not that the heart may be established by meats *also*, but that grace is the *only* way thereof, though some foolishly pretended, that it might be done by *eating*, or by *abstinence* from eating, of meats, by virtue of divine prohibition, “touch not, taste not, handle not,” Col. ii, 21; which distinction of meats arose from the *altar*; for the beast that might be offered at the altar in sacrifice being *clean*, and the first fruits being thus dedicated unto God, the whole of the kind became clean to the people; and what had not the privilege of the *altar*, was prohibited.

And hence we may see the reason why the Jews laid so great a stress on these *meats*, viz. because the taking of them away declared, that their *altar*, which was the life and centre of their religion, was of *no more use*. And hence we may also see the reason of the apostle’s different treating with them in this matter; for, speaking of meats in their *own nature*, he declares, that the use of them is a thing *indifferent*, wherein every one is to be left to his own liberty, to be regulated only by the circumstance of giving offence or scandal, see Rom. xiv; but when he treats of them as a pretended necessary observance, as connected with the *altar*, he utterly condemns them, Gal. iv; Col. ii, 16—23.

“For it is (*καλον*) a good thing;” it is *excellent*, approved of God, and our incumbent duty to labor after. And in this *positive comparative* is included, it is good and excellent to such a degree, as to be far *better* than what they pretended.

§6. “Which have not profited them that have been occupied therein,” (*ενοις περιπαλυσαντες*) *them who have walked in them*. To walk in meats, is to observe the



doctrines concerning them; "touch not, taste not, handle not." And he speaketh of the time *past*, as well as of the time then present; for *of themselves* they never profited those that observed them. They were a part of the *yoke* that was imposed on them, until the time of reformation, chap. iv, 10; and so far as any trusted to them, as a means of acceptance with God, they were *pernicious* to them; which the apostle intimates by a common figure, when he says, that "they did not profit" them; that is, they tended to *their hurt*; and much more after their obligation *ceased*.

§7. And there are many weighty directions intimated and included in these words, for the use of the church in all seasons; as,

1. That there is a revelation of truth given to the church in the word of God, which is the only doctrinal foundation and rule of faith.

2. That this doctrine is every way suited to promote divine grace in believers, and the attainment of their own salvation.

3. That doctrines unsuited to this first revelation by Christ and his apostles soon sprung up to the trouble of the church, and they have continued to do so in all ensuing ages.

4. Where such doctrines are entertained they make men *double minded*, unstable, turning them from the truth, and drawing them at length into perdition.

5. The ruin of the church in after ages arose from the neglect of this apostolical caution, in giving way to *various* and *strange doctrines*.

6. Herein lies the *safety* of all believers and all churches; namely, to keep themselves precisely to the first complete revelation of divine truth in the word of God, let men *pretend* what they will, and *bluster* while they please; in an adherence to this principle we

are safe; and if we depart from it, we shall be hurried and carried about through innumerable uncertainties into ruin.

7. And we see, that those who consider any thing but *grace*, as the only means to establish their hearts in peace with God, shall in vain exercise themselves in other things and ways to that end.

#### VERSE 10.

*We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*

§1. The direct design of the words. §2. Our altar, what. §3. On what ground, and in what respect, they who serve the tabernacle have no right to partake of our altar. §4. Observations.

§1. **T**HE design of the context, and coherence of the words, have in general been spoken to before; having asserted the only way of the establishment of the heart in peace with God, and the uselessness of all distinction of meats to that purpose, he here declar-eth the foundation of the truth; for whereas the sole ground of all distinction of meats, and other ceremonies among the Jews, was the *altar* in the tabernacle, with its nature, use, and services, he lets them know that “we have an altar” and services quite of another kind than those which arose from the altar of old, such as he describes, ver. 13—15; this is the direct design of the apostle in this place, and the proper analysis of his words.

§2. The altar which we now have, is *Christ alone*, for he was both priest, altar, and sacrifice to the church, as to all the use and efficacy of them, which is evident in the context; for *this altar* is, in its nature, use, and efficacy, *opposed* to the altar in the tabernacle; and indeed the apostle expressly declares that Jesus sanctified the people with his own blood, which was to be.

done at or on the *altar*; and “by him,” *as our altar*, we are to offer our sacrifices unto God, ver. 15, “the fruit of our lips, confessing unto his name;” which leads us off from all thoughts of any material altar. Estius, one of the soberest expositors of the Roman church, concludes, that it is Christ, and his sacrifice alone, is intended in this place.

§3. “Whereof they have no right to eat (*οἱ λατρευόντες*) *who serve the tabernacle*,” he speaks in the *present tense*, those who *do serve*, or who *are serving* at the tabernacle; for he hath respect to the original institution of divine worship, which was in the *tabernacle*; and he takes no notice of the things that ensued on the erection of the temple, because it made no alterations in the *worship* itself, and he supposeth them to be in the state wherein they were appointed; “*who serve*,” namely, the priests and Levites in their several orders and degrees, who had a right to eat of the altar, or the things that were consecrated thereby, and a part of which was offered thereon. “They who wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar,” 1 Cor. ix, 13; x, 18; nor was it lawful for *any others* to eat any thing from the altar, unless in the case of the thank-offering by special indulgence, or in extreme necessity.

“Whereof they have no right to eat,” (*ἐξ ἧς*, i. e. *ἁγιασθησῶν*) of *which altar*, and all the things which are sanctified thereby; *to eat*; what was every one’s *portion* was to be *eaten*, hence the apostle useth the word (*Φαγεῖν*) *to eat* here for any kind of *participation*; *they have no* (*ἐξουσίαν*) *right* or title, by virtue of any divine institution; he doth not absolutely exclude such persons from ever attaining an interest in our altar; no, far from it; but he doth it in two respects;—they had no such right by virtue of their office and relation to the tabernacle; and—whilst they adhered to the use of

their own tabernacle, altar, &c. for the establishment of their hearts with God, they would have no interest in this altar of ours.

§4. From hence we may learn;

1. That the Lord Christ, in the one sacrifice of himself, is the altar of the new testament church.

2. That this altar is every way sufficient of itself for the grand end of an altar in general; namely, the sanctification of the people, ver. 12.

3. The erection of any other altar in the church, or the introduction of any other sacrifice requiring a material altar, is derogatory to the sacrifice of Christ, and excludes him from being our altar.

4. Whereas the design of the apostle in the whole of this discourse, is, to declare the glory of the gospel, and its worship, above that of the law; of our priest and altar above theirs, it is fond to think, that by "*our altar*" he intends such a *material* fabric as is every way inferior to that of old.

5. When God appointed a material altar for his service, he himself enjoined the making of it, prescribed its form and use, with all its utensils, services, and ceremonies, allowing of nothing relating to it but what was by himself appointed; it is not therefore probable, that, under the New Testament, there should be a material altar of equal necessity, without a divine appointment. But,

6. Sinners, under a sense of guilt, have in the gospel an altar of atonement to which they may have continual access for the expiation of their sins; "he is the propitiation."

7. That all privileges, of whatever nature, without a participation of Christ, as the altar and sacrifice of the church, are of no advantage to their possessors.

## VERSES 11, 12.

*For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp; wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

§1. The apostle's threefold design. §2. Exposition. The typical sin offering. §3. The burning of the bodies without the camp. §4. The inference, wherefore Jesus. §5. Expository remarks. §6. Without the gate, what implied in it. §7. Observations.

§1. **T**HE apostle in these words, proceeds to the confirmation of his whole present design in all the parts of it, which are three;

1. To declare of what *nature our altar* and sacrifice are, and thereon of what nature and kind the *duties* of religion are which depend upon them.

2. To testify that the removal of all *distinction of meats*, by virtue of this altar, was signified in the old institutions which had their accomplishment in this altar and sacrifice.

3. To shew the necessity of the *suffering of Christ* without the gate of the city, from the *typical* representation of it; and so to make way for treating of the *use* we are to make of it.

§2. "For the bodies of those beasts," &c. (Περὶ ἀπαρτίας) *for sin*; referring to the *sin offering* on the great day of *atonement*; see on chap. x, 6; the blood of *that sacrifice alone* was carried into the most holy place by the High Priest; and there was an especial institution for *burning the bodies* of the beasts whose blood was then offered without the camp, Lev. xvi, 27.

§3. The *burning of the bodies* was ordered to be *without the camp*; namely, whilst the Israelites were in the wilderness, encamped round about the *tabernacle*. To this *camp* the city of *Jerusalem* afterwards answered; wherefore, when this sacrifice was observed

in the *temple*, the "bodies of the beasts" were carried *out of the city* to be burned; hence the apostle makes the *suffering* of Christ *without the gate*, to answer the burning of those bodies *without the camp*; the city and the camp being in institution the same thing. In this sacrifice there was *no eating*; all was consumed; hence, the apostle proves that *meats* did never contribute any thing towards the establishment of the heart before God, for there was no use of them in the sacrifice whereby the *atonement* for sin was made; whereon the establishment of the heart dependeth; yea, there was a clear prefiguration, that when the great atonement was made, there should be no use of the *distinction of meats* left in the church.

§4. "*Wherefore Jesus also;*" being to fulfil all righteousness, and the whole law, what he did was regulated by the *predictions* of scripture, and the *typical* representations of what was to be done; the expression intimates a *similitude*, such as is between the type and the thing typified; *as* was that sacrifice, or sin offering, under the law, *so* was this of Christ—"*Wherefore Jesus also.*"

§5. There are sundry truths of great importance in these words, the consideration whereof will give us the just exposition of them.

1. That Jesus in his sufferings *offered* himself to God; this is plain in the words; "that he might sanctify the people with his blood (*επαθε*) *he suffered;*" for in that *suffering*, his blood was shed whereby the people were sanctified; which utterly overthrows the SOCINIAN figment of his *oblation in heaven*.

2. That in his sufferings he offered himself a *sin offering*; in answer to those legal sacrifices, whose blood was carried into the holy place, and whose bodies were

burned without the camp; and this belonged to *sin-offerings only*.

3. The *end* of this offering was, that he might *sanctify the people*; this was (*finis operis & operantis*) *the end of what was done, and of him who did it*; (*viz*) *that*, hath respect to the *final* cause; and the *object* of the work wrought is *the people*; that is, all the elect people of God, both Jews and Gentiles, 1 John ii, 2.

4. That which he designed and accomplished for this people, was *their sanctification*; and it is here manifest, by the respect his blood had to the great sacrifice of expiation, that it signifies to have *atonement made*.

5. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ designed for his church, and he did it by his *own blood*, Acts xx, 28; Rev. i, 5; an evidence of the unspeakable worth and value of this offering, and whereon all its efficacy doth depend. What a testimony is here of what it cost the Lord Jesus to sanctify the people; even with his own blood!

§6. "Suffered without the gate;" intimating that he *left the city and church state* of the Jews, put an end to all acceptable sacrificing in the city and temple; that his sacrifice and its benefits were *not included* in the church of the Jews, but were finally extended to the whole world, 1 John ii, 2; that his death and suffering were not only a *sacrifice*, but a *punishment* for sin, the sins of the people that were to be *sanctified* by his blood; for he went out of the city as a malefactor, and died the death which by divine institution was a sign of the *curse*, Gal. iii, 13.

By all these things it appears, how *different our altar and sacrifice* are from theirs under the law; and how necessary it is from thence that we should have a *worship* of another nature than what they had, wherein particular the *distinction of meats* should be of no use:

§7. And we may hence observe;

1. The complete answering and fulfilling of all types in the person and office of Christ, testifieth the sameness and immutability of the council of God in the whole work of redemption, notwithstanding all the outward changes that have been in the institutions of divine worship; from hence it is manifest, that, in the whole, Jesus Christ is "*the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.*"

2. The church could no otherwise be sanctified, but by the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, see on chap. x, 4—7.

3. The Lord Jesus out of his incomprehensible love to his people, would spare nothing that was needful for their sanctification, their reconciliation, and dedication unto God; for he did it with his *own blood*.

4. The whole church is *perfectly sanctified* by the offering of the blood of Christ as to *impetration*; and it shall be so actually by the virtue of the same blood in its *application*.

5. When the Lord Jesus Christ carried all the sins of his own people in his body on the tree, he left the city as a type of all unbelievers under the wrath and curse of God.

6. Going out of the city as a malefactor, he bore all the reproaches that were due to the sins of the church, which was a part of the curse.

VERSES 13, 14.

*Let us go forth therefore unto him, without the camp, bearing his reproach; for here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

§1. An exhortation to go forth without the camp. §2. To Christ, to bear his reproach. §3, 4. The reasons to enforce it. §5, 6. Observations.

§1. **F**ROM the account given of our *altar* in the suffering and offering of Christ, the apostle draws an *exhortation* to a general duty.



"Let us go forth therefore unto him (ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) *without the camp.*" He refers, as before hinted, to the original institution in the wilderness; therefore he confines his discourse to the *tabernacle*, without any mention of the *temple*, or the *city* wherein it was built, though all that he speaks be equally applicable to them. Now the *camp* in the wilderness was that space of ground which was taken up by the tents, as they were regularly pitched about the tabernacle; out of this *camp* the bodies of the beasts for the sin offerings were carried and burned; and to this afterwards answered the city of Jerusalem; now the *camp* and city were the seat of all the *political and religious* converse of the *Jewish church*; and to be *in the camp*, is to have a right to all the privileges and advantages of all the commonwealth of *Israel*, and the whole service of the tabernacle; but here it may be asked, how were the Hebrews on account of this sacrifice of Christ, and the sanctification of the people by his own blood, to *go out of this camp*? It is not a *local* departure out of the city that is primarily intended, though I am apt to think, from the next verse, that the apostle had some respect also thereto; but what is principally intended, is a *moral and religious* going forth; there was nothing that these Hebrews more valued, and more tenaciously adhered to, than their *political and religious interest in the commonwealth of Israel*; they could not understand upon what principle they must forsake all the glorious privileges granted of old to that church and people; this therefore the apostle clearly shews them by the suffering of Christ without the camp.

§2. They were thus to "*go forth unto him*;" he went forth at the gate, and suffered; and we must go forth after him. And it denotes,

1. A relinquishment of all the privileges of the *camp and city* for his sake; leave *them*, and go to *him*.

2. A closing by faith with his *sacrifice* and sanctification thereby, in opposition to all the sacrifices of the law.

3. The *owning of him* under all that reproach and contempt which was cast upon him in his suffering without the gate; or a not being ashamed of the cross.

4. The *betaking ourselves to him* in his office, as the king, priest, and prophet of the church, for our acceptance with God, and in his worship, ver. 15.

"Bearing his reproach;" either the reproach that was cast on *his* person, or the reproach that is cast on *ours* for his sake, see on chap. x, 33; this we *bear* when we patiently undergo it, and are not shaken in our minds, in what we suffer by it. The sum of all is, that we must leave all to go forth to a crucified Christ. An enforcement of this exhortation, or an encouragement to this duty, the apostle adds in the next words.

§3. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," see on chap. xi, 10—16.

Their interest in the city of Jerusalem was gone, after the Lord Jesus went without the gate to suffer. Now it is not said of believers absolutely, that they belonged to no city, but that they have no *continuing city*. But it is spoken on other accounts.

1. They had *no city* that was the seat of divine worship, and to which it was confined, as it was before with respect to Jerusalem.

2. They had no city *wherein they did rest*, or which was the seat of their (*πολιτευμα*) conversation; Phil. iii, 20. Not such a city as contained their lot and portion.

3. They had not in this world *an abiding city*. Whatever conveniences they might have for a season,

yet they had no city that was to *abide for ever*, nor which they could for ever abide in.

And probably herein the apostle shews the difference and opposition between the state of the Christian church, and that under the Old Testament; for, after they had wandered in the wilderness and elsewhere, for some ages, they were brought to *rest* in Jerusalem; but, saith he, with us it is not so; “but we seek one that is to come.” See the description of the state of pilgrimage here intended, in the Exposition on chap. xi, 9—16.

§4. “But (ἐπιζητούμεν) *we seek* one to come,” with desire and diligence; not as a thing unknown, but (τὴν μέλλουσαν) *that city*; not one indefinitely, but *that* which was to be their eternal habitation; *to come*; not merely because it was *future* as to their state and interest in it, but with respect to their being *certain* of enjoying it; for it was *prepared* for them, and *promised* to them.

§5. And we are herein taught,

1. That all privileges and advantages whatever are to be renounced, which are inconsistent with an interest in Christ, and a participation of him, Phil. iii, 4—10.

2. It was the duty of the Hebrews to forsake those ways of worship, which were originally of divine institution, that they might wholly give up themselves to Christ, in all things pertaining to God; much more is it ours to forego all such pretences to religious worship, as are of human invention. And,

3. Whereas the *camp* contained not only *ecclesiastical*, but also *political* privileges, we should be ready to forego all *civil* accommodations also, as houses, lands, possessions. &c. when called to give them up on the account of Christ and the gospel.

4. If we will go forth to Christ, as *without the camp*, or separated from the sinful concerns of this world, we shall assuredly meet with reproaches.

§6. 1. Believers are not like to meet with any such encouraging entertainment in this world, as to make them unready or unwilling to desert it, and go forth after Christ, bearing his reproach; for “we have here no continuing city.”

2. This world never did, and never will, give a state of rest and satisfaction to believers. It will not afford them a *city*; it is *Jerusalem above* that is the *vision of peace*. Arise and depart, this is not your rest.

3. Though destitute of a present satisfactory rest, God hath not left believers without a prospect of what shall be so to eternity. We *have* not, but we *seek*.

4. As God hath, in his unparalleled love and care, prepared a city of rest for us, it is our great duty continually to endeavor the attainment of it in the ways of his appointment.

5. The main business of believers in this world is, diligently to seek after the city of God, or the attainment of eternal rest with him. This is the character whereby they may be known.

VERSES 15—17.

*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*

§1. Transition to Christian duties, as connected with the Christian altar. §2. Our sacrifices to be offered by Christ. §3. Giving thanks. §4. Other sacrifices; to do good, and to communicate. §5. Which are pleasing to God. §6. Other duties. §7. Obedience to our guides. §8. Who watch for our souls. §9. And are accountable. §10. A motive of obedience to them. §11—13. Observation.

§1. **H**AVING declared of what nature our altar is, and the fundamental points of our religion thence arising; our faith in Christ Jesus, and the profession thereof in a readiness for the cross, and conformity to him thereby; the apostle proceeds to declare the nature of *our altar and sacrifice*, in opposition to those *doctrines and observances about meats*, and other things of a similar nature, which depended on the altar, with its institutions. Having an *altar*, we must have *sacrifices* to offer; without which the former is of no use.

§2. "*By him* (*δι αὐτοῦ*) therefore let us offer." All the sacrifices of the people under the law were offered by the *priests*; wherefore respect is here had to Christ in the discharge of his *priestly office*. He sanctifies and *dedicates* our persons unto God, that we may be meet to offer sacrifices to him; he hath *prepared a way* for our access with boldness into the holy place, where we may offer these sacrifices; he *bears the iniquity* of our holy things, and makes our offerings acceptable through his merits and intercession; he continues in the tabernacle of his own human nature, to offer up to God all the duties and services of the church.

And "*by him*," is the same with *by him alone*. There is a profane opinion and practice in the *Papal* church, about offering our sacrifices of prayer and praise to God *by others*; as by saints and angels, especially by the *blessed Virgin*. But are they our *altar*? Did they *sanctify* us by their blood? Are they the high priests of our church? Have they made us priests unto God? or prepared a new and a living way for our access to the throne of grace? It is on account of *these things*, that we are said to offer our sacrifice by *Christ*, and it is the highest blasphemy to assign them to any other.

"Let us offer," the *special nature* of it is an offering, a sacrifice of praise; praise is the matter of the sacrifice. By the law no blood could be offered on the altar, unless the beast were immediately slain at the altar in order thereto, and there answerably is a twofold spiritual sacrifice, wherein our Christian profession eminently consists. The first is that of a broken spirit, Psal. li, 17; *repentance*, in mortification and crucifying of the flesh, answers the *mactation*, or killing of the beast for sacrifice, which was the death and destruction of the flesh. The other is the sacrifice of praise, which answers the offering of the blood on the altar, with the fire and incense, which yieldeth a sweet savor unto God.

This we are enjoined to offer (δια παντος) continually; without being confined to appointed times and places, Luke xviii, 1; 1 Thes. v, 17; for it may comprise places as well as times, 1 Cor. i, 2; and also including diligence and perseverance; with a constant readiness of mind, an holy disposition and inclination of heart to it, acted in all proper seasons and opportunities.

§3. (Τετέστι καρπον χειλεων) that is, the fruit of our lips; it is generally granted that this expression is taken from Hos. xiv, 2, where the same duty is called (קריבן ופיו) the calves of our lips; for the sense is the same, and praise to God is intended in both places. But the design of the apostle in alleging this place is peculiar; for the prophet is praying in the name of the church for mercy, grace, and deliverance; and thereon he declareth what is the duty of it upon an answer to their prayers. Now whereas this, according to the institutions of the law, was to have been in vows and thank offerings of calves and other beasts, he declares that, instead of them all, vocal thankfulness in celebrating the praise of God, should succeed. This he calls, "the

calves of our lips," because that the *use of our lips* in praise was to come in the room of all thank offerings by calves. The psalmist speaks to the same purpose, Ps. li, 16, 17.

But moreover, the mercy, grace, and deliverance, which the prophet treats about, were those that were to come by the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. After that there was to be no more *sacrifice of calves*, but spiritual sacrifices of praise only, which he therefore calls the "calves of our lips." The apostle therefore doth not only *cite his words*, but respects the *design* of the Holy Ghost in them, which was—to declare the *cessation* of all carnal sacrifices, upon the deliverance of the church by the sacrifice of Christ. And he changeth the words from "calves" to "fruit," to declare the sense of the *metaphor* in the prophet. And because there may be some ambiguity in that expression, "the fruit of our lips," which in general is the product and effect of them, he adds a declaration of its nature—giving thanks, or confessing, "to his name;" to profess and acknowledge his glorious excellencies and works.

§4. Because he persisteth in his design of declaring the nature of gospel worship and obedience, in opposition to the institutions of the law; he calls these duties also *sacrifices*, upon the account of their being accepted with God, as the sacrifices of old were.

"But to do good," &c. (*δε*) *but*, is only continuative, and may be rendered *moreover*; to the former duties *add this also*. Having prescribed the great duty of *divine worship*, some may think that this is the *whole* required of them; *but*, to obviate that dangerous evil, *forget not* this important addition. There may be a *Meiosis* in the expression, "to do good *forget not*;" that is, diligently attend to those things; which includeth,

1. A gracious *propensity* and readiness of mind to do good to all. "The liberal deviseth liberal things," Isa. xxxii, 8.

2. The *acting* of this inclination in all ways spiritual and temporal, whereby we may be useful and helpful to mankind.

3. The embracing of all *occasions* and opportunities for the exercise of pity, compassion, and loving-kindness on the earth. It is required, that the design of our lives, according to our abilities, be *to do good to others*; which is comprehensive of all the duties of the second table.

This (*ευχολία*) *beneficence* is the life, salt, and as it were, the ligament of human society; it is the glory of religion, rendering it divinely honorable; is a great evidence of the renovation of our natures into the likeness and image of God, and a convincing demonstration of our having altered our centre, end, and interest, from self to God.

A particular instance of this beneficence is (*κοινωνία*) *communication*, the actual exercise of that charity towards the poor, which is required of us according to our ability. To be negligent herein, is to despise the wisdom of God, in the disposal of the lots and conditions of his own children in the world, in so great variety, for the exercise of our graces; such as patience, submission, and trust, in the poor; thankfulness, bounty, and charity, in the rich. Where these graces are mutually exercised, there is beauty, order, and harmony, in this effect of Divine wisdom, with a revenue of glory and praise to himself. He that *gives* aright finds the power of Divine grace in his heart; and he that *receives* aright, is sensible of Divine care and love in *seasonable* supplies. God is nigh to both. No man is rich or poor merely for himself; but to fill up that



public order of things, which God hath designed to his own glory.

§5. The observance of these duties the apostle presseth on them, because "with such sacrifices God is well pleased." He still calls our Christian duties by the name of *sacrifices*, seeing they have the general nature of sacrifices, as to *cost* and *parting with* what is ours. And, indeed, all things done for God, to his glory, and which is accepted with him, may be so called. The force of the motive consists in this, that "with these sacrifices (*ευαγε ςελαι ο Θεος*) "God is well pleased;" there is a clear intimation of the *special pleasure* of God in these things; he is *well pleased* with it in an especial manner.

§6. "Obey them that have the rule over you." This is the third instance of duties required in our Christian profession, on the account of the sacrifice of Christ, and our sanctification by his blood. Let us *go forth*—let us *sacrifice*, and—let us *obey*.

A few things may be here premised:

1. There is a supposition of a *settled church state* among them to whom the apostle wrote, see chap. x, 24, 25; for there were among them *rulers* and the *ruled*.

2. The epistle was written immediately to the *community of the faithful*, or body of the *fraternity* in the church, as distinguished from their *rulers* and guides, ver. 24.

3. The special duty here prescribed extends to all that concerns church rule and order; for all springs from the "due obedience of the church to its rulers," and their due discharge of their office.

§7. "Them that have the rule over you," (*τοις ηγεμενοις υμων*) *your guides* or *leaders*; who rule, not with magisterial power or rigid authority; but with spiritual

care and benignity, which were then of two sorts, 1 Tim. v, 17; such as, together with rule, labored also in the word and doctrine, and such as attended to *rule only*. Those here intended were the ordinary elders, or officers of the church, which were then settled among them.

It is with respect to their *teaching*, or pastoral feeding, that they are commanded to *obey them*; for the word (*πειθομαι*) signifies obedience on a persuasion; such as doctrine, instruction, or teaching produceth. And the *submission* required (*υπεικει*) *submit yourselves*, respects their *rule*; obey their doctrine, and submit to their rule. Some things must be remarked to clear the apostle's intention:

1. It is not a blind *implicit obedience and subjection*, that is here prescribed; for there is nothing more contrary to the whole nature of gospel obedience, which is our *reasonable service*.

2. It respects them in their *office* only. If those who suppose themselves in office, teach and enjoin things that belong not to their office, there is no obedience due to them by virtue of this command.

3. It is their duty so to *obey*, whilst they "teach the things which the Lord Jesus Christ hath *appointed* them to teach," Matt. xxviii, 20; and to *submit* to their *rule*, whilst it is exercised in the name of Christ according to the word, and not otherwise. When they depart from *these*, there is neither obedience, nor submission, due to them. Wherefore,

4. In the performance of these duties, there is supposed a *judgment* to be made of what is enjoined or taught by the word of God; and our obedience to them must be obedience to God.

5. On this supposition their *word is to be obeyed*, and their *rule submitted to*; not only because they are true

and right *materially*; but also because they are *theirs* and conveyed from them by divine institution. A regard is to be had to their *authority* and *office powers* in what they teach and do.

§8. "For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Obey them, for they *watch*; make this consideration a motive to your duty (*αγρυπνεῖσι*) *they watch* with the greatest care and diligence, not without trouble and danger; as Jacob kept and watched the flock of Laban in the night (*υπερ των ψυχων υμων*) *for your souls*; for their good, denoting the final cause; that your souls may be guided, kept, and directed to their present duty, and future reward. As if it were said, the important work of these rulers is only to take care of your *souls*; to preserve them from evil, sin, and backsliding; to instruct and feed them; to promote your faith and obedience, that they may lead you safely to eternal rest; for this is their office appointed, and herein do they labor continually.

Where there is not the design of *church rulers*, where it is not their work and employment, where they do not evidence it to be so, they can claim no obedience from the church by virtue of this rule; because this watching belongs essentially to the exercise of the office, without which it is but an empty name. On the other side, that all the members of the church may be kept in due obedience to their guides, it is necessary, that they always "consider the nature of this office, and their discharge of it." When they find that the office itself is a divine institution for the good of their souls; and that it is discharged by their guides, with labor, care, and diligence, they will be disposed to obedience and submission. And herein consists the beauty and usefulness of church order; when the guides make it evident, that their whole design is la-

boriously and diligently to promote the eternal welfare of the souls committed to their care; and when the people, on the other hand, obey them in their doctrine, and submit to them in their rule.

§9. "As they that must give account;" that is, of their office, and the discharge of it. They are not owners, but stewards; they are not sovereigns, but servants. There is a *great Shepherd* to whom they must *give an account* of their office, of their work, and of the flock committed to their charge. Although the *last great account*, which all church guides must give of their stewardships, may be intended, yet the present account which they give every day to Jesus Christ, of the work committed to them, is also included. There are no conscientious church guides, but do continually represent to the Lord Christ the state of their flock, and what is the success of their ministry among them. If they thrive, if they flourish, if they go on to perfection, this they give him an *account* of; blessing him for the work of his spirit and grace among them. If they are unthrifty, fallen under decays, &c. therein also they give an account to Jesus Christ; they spread it before him, mourning with grief and sorrow. The supposition of an account given with *sorrow*, can refer to no other account, but that which is *present*, with respect to the success of the ministry. And, indeed, much of the life of the ministry, and benefit of the church, depends on the continual "giving an account" to Christ by prayer and thanksgiving, of the state of the church, and success of the word therein.

Those guides who esteem themselves obliged there, to, and who live in the *practice* of it, will find their minds engaged thereby, to constant diligence, and earnest laboring in the discharge of their duty.

§10. "For that is unprofitable for you." Now this *joy* or *sorrow*, wherewith they are affected in giving

their accounts, doth not here immediately respect themselves, or their own ministry, (for they are "a sweet savor unto God, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish;") but the church committed to their guidance.

1. The duty is urged, that they may give their account (*μετὰ χαρᾶς*) *with joy*. What matter of the *greatest joy* is it to faithful pastors, when they find the souls of their charge thriving under their ministry! Thus one of the apostles themselves: I have *no greater joy*, than to hear that my children walk in the truth," 3 John, ver. 4. And thus another: "What is our hope, or *joy*, or *crown of rejoicing*? are ye not in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and *joy*." 1 Thes. ii, 19, 20. And when they give this account with glory and praise, it fills their heart with joy in a particular manner. And this, on many accounts, is "*profitable*" for the church itself; they will quickly find the effects of the *joy of their guides*, in their account, by the cheerful discharge of their ministry, and in token of Christ being well pleased with them.

2. The duty is pressed for the avoidance of the contrary frame (*μὴ στεναζόντες*) *not with grief*; not grieving or mourning. The sadness of the hearts of gospel ministers upon the unprofitableness of the people, or their shameful miscarriages, is not easy to be expressed. With what sighing, what *groaning* (as the word signifies) their accounts to Christ are accompanied, he alone knows, and the last day will manifest. When it is thus, although *they* have the present burden and *trouble* of it, yet it is *unprofitable* for the people, both here and hereafter; unprofitable in the discouragement of their guides, in the displeasure of Christ, and in all the alarming consequences which will ensue.

§11. From the whole passage thus explained, observe:

1. Thankfulness is the peculiar animating principle of all gospel obedience. And,

2. Every act of grace in God, or love in Christ, towards us, is in its own nature obligatory to thankful obedience.

3. The religious worship of any creatures, under whatever pretence, hath no place in our Christian profession. And,

4. Every act and duty of faith hath in it the nature of a sacrifice to God, wherewith he is well pleased.

5. The great, yea, the only encouragement which we have to bring our sacrifice to God, with expectation of acceptance, lieth herein; that we are to offer them by him, who can and will make them acceptable in his sight. And,

6. Whatever we tender to God, and not *by Christ*, hath no other acceptance with him than the sacrifice of Cain.

7. To abide and abound in solemn praise to God, for Jesus Christ, his mediation and sacrifice, is the constant duty of the church, and the best character of sincere believers.

8. A constant solemn acknowledgment of the glory of God, and of the holy excellencies of his nature (here called his name) in the work of redemption, by the suffering and offering of Christ, is our principal duty, and the animating soul and principle of all other duties.

This is the great sacrifice of the church, the principal end of all its ordinances of worship, the means of expressing our faith and trust in the mediation of Christ, and of giving up the revenue of glory to God, which, in this world, we are entrusted with.

§12. 1. It is dangerous to the souls of men, when an attendance to one duty is abused to countenance

the neglect of another. So may the duties of the first table be abused, to the neglect of those of the other, and the contrary. There is an *harmony* in obedience, and a failure in any one part disturbs the whole.

2. The unbelieving world itself receives great advantage by the grace administered from the death of Christ, and its *fruits*, whereof the apostle treats; for there is an inclination wrought in them who are sanctified by his blood, *to do good to all men*, as they are able. And did all those, who at this day profess the name of Christ, shew forth the virtue of his mediation in *these duties*, both the profession of religion would be glorious, and the benefit which the world would receive thereby, would be unspeakable.

3. *That* religion which doth not dispose men to benignity, and the exercise of loving-kindness towards all, hath no relation to the cross of Christ.

4. Much less hath that, which disposeth its professors to rage, cruelty, and oppression of others.

5. We ought always to admire the glory of Divine wisdom, which hath so disposed the state of the church in this world, that there should be a continual occasion for the exercise of every grace mutually among ourselves.

6. Beneficence and communication are the only *outward* evidences and demonstrations of the renovation of God's image in us.

7. God hath laid up provision for the poor, in the *grace* and *duty* of the rich; not in their coffers, and their barns, wherein they have no interest. And in that grace lies the right of the poor to be supplied.

8. That the will of God revealed concerning his acceptance of any duties, is the most effectual motive to our diligence in them. Promise of acceptance gives life to obedience.

9. The works and duties, which are peculiarly useful to men, are peculiarly acceptable to God.

§13. 1. The due obedience of the church, in all its members, to the rulers of it, in the discharge of their duty, is both the best means of its edification, and the chief cause of order and peace in the whole body.

2. An assumption of right and power, by any, to rule over the church, without evidencing their design and work to be a watching for the good of their souls, is pernicious to themselves, and ruinous to the church.

3. Those who attend conscientiously and diligently to the discharge of their ministerial work, towards their flocks, have no greater *joy*, or *sorrow* in this world, than what accompanies the daily account which they give to Christ, of the discharge of their duty among them, according to the success they meet with,

VERSES 18, 19.

*Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner,*

§1. Contents of the close of the epistle. §2. The true reason of Paul's concealing his name. §3. Exposition. His request of their prayers. §4. The ground of his confidence. §5. His farther earnestness. §6. Observation.

§1. **O**F the close of the epistle, which only now remains, there are three parts. (1.) The apostle's *request* of their prayers for himself, ver. 18, 19. (2.) His solemn *benedictive prayer* for them, ver. 20, 21. (3.) An account of the state of Timothy, with the usual salutation, ver. 22—25.

§2. From this concluding part of the epistle it is evident, that the author did not *conceal* himself from the Hebrews, neither was that the reason why his *name* was not prefixed to it, as to all his other epistles. For he



plainly declares himself, in all his circumstances, as one who was very well known to them. But the true and only reason of that omission was, because he dealt not with these Jewish converts merely by virtue of his *apostolical authority*, and the revelation of the gospel, which he had received from Jesus Christ, on which ground he dealt with the Gentile churches; but lays his foundation in the authority of the Old Testament scriptures, which they acknowledged, and resolves all his arguments and exhortations thereto. Hence he gave no title to the epistle; but immediately laid down the principle and authority on which he would proceed, *viz.* the Divine revelation of the Old Testament.

§3. There are in the words:—A *request* made, “Pray for us.” The ground which gave him confidence therein; “for we trust,” &c. A pressing the same request, with respect to his present state and design, ver. 19. “But I beseech you,” &c. It was their duty always to pray for him; but to mind them of that duty, and to manifest what esteem he had of it, he makes it a point of request; as we ought mutually to do among ourselves. And this argues a confidence in their faith and mutual love, without which he would not have required their prayer for him. And he grants that the prayers of the *meanest saints* may be useful to the greatest apostles, both with respect to their persons, and the discharge of their office. Hence it was usual with Paul, to desire the prayers of the churches to whom he wrote, 2 Cor. i, 11; Ephes. vi, 19, &c. For in mutual prayer for each other consists one principal part of the communion of saints, wherein they are helpful to one another at all times, and in all conditions. And herein he also manifests what esteem he

had of them, whose prayers he thought would find acceptance with God on his behalf.

§4. As a *ground* of his confidence in this request, he adds: "for we trust we have a good conscience." As *sincerity* in the testimony of a good conscience gives us a confidence before God, in our *own* prayers, notwithstanding our many failings and infirmities; so, it is requisite in our requests for the prayers of others. For it is the height of *hypocrisy* to desire others to pray for our deliverance from that which we willingly indulge ourselves in; or for such mercies as we cannot receive without foregoing what we will not forsake. This, therefore, the apostle here testifies concerning himself, in opposition to all *reproaches* and *false reports*, which they had heard concerning him.

The testimony of his "having a good conscience," consists in this, that he "was willing, in all things, to live honestly." A will, resolution, and suitable endeavors to live *honestly* in all things, is a fruit and evidence of a good conscience. Being "*willing*," denotes readiness, resolution, and endeavor, extending to *all things*, wherein conscience is concerned, or our whole duty towards God and men. The expression of "*living honestly*," as it is commonly used, doth not reach the emphasis of the original. *A beauty in conversation*, or exact eminency therein, is intended. This was the apostle's design in all things, and ought to be that of all the ministers of the gospel, both for their own sakes, as it is what in an especial manner is required of them, and also that they may be convincing examples to the people.

§5. "But I beseech you the rather," &c. He is further earnest in his request, with respect to his design of *coming in person unto them*. Here it is implied, that

he *had been with them* formerly—that he *desires to be restored* to them; that is, to come to them *again*, that they might have the benefit of his ministry, and he the comfort of their faith and obedience; that the Lord Christ did dispose of the affairs of his church much according to their prayers, to his own glory, and their great consolation. Yet it is *uncertain* whether ever this desire of his was accomplished or no; for the epistle was written after the close of the apostolical history in the *Book of the Acts*, and from thence forward we have little certainty in matter of fact.

§6. *Observation.* According to our present *apprehensions of duty*, we may lawfully have earnest desires after, and may pray for such things, as shall not in fact come to pass. The sacred purposes of God are not the rules of our prayers.

#### VERSES 20, 21.

*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.*

§1. The apostle's prayer for them. §2. The title given to God; the God of peace. §3. The work ascribed to him, as the God of peace. §4. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant. §5. The way whereby we may be enabled effectually to do the will of God. §6. An ascription of glory to Christ. §7. Observations. §8. The author's devout thanks and praise to Christ, for his gracious help.

§1. **H**AVING desired *their prayer for him*, he adds, *his prayer for them*, and therewith gives a solemn close to the whole epistle. A glorious prayer it is, enclosing the whole mystery of Divine grace, both in its original, and the way of its communication. He prays for the fruit and benefit of all he had *before instructed them in*, to be applied to them; for the sub-

stance of the whole doctrinal part of the epistle is included in his comprehensive prayer.

There are some things to be considered in this prayer, for the exposition of the words. (1.) The *title* assigned to God, suited to the request made. (2.) The *work* ascribed to him suitable to that title. (3.) The *things prayed for*, &c. (4.) A *doxology*, with a solemn close of the whole.

§2. The *title* assigned to God, or the name by which he calls upon him is, "the God of peace." All things being brought by sin into a state of *disorder*, *confusion*, and *enmity*, there was no *spring of peace* left; no cause of it, but in the nature and will of God, which eminently justifies this title." He alone is the *author* of all peace, both in the *preparation* and the *communication* of it by Jesus Christ. All peace is from him; that which we have with himself, in our own souls, between angels and men, between Jews and Gentiles. The Hebrews had been tossed, perplexed, and disquieted, with *various doctrines* and pleas about the law, and the observance of its institutions. Wherefore, having performed his part in communicating the truth to them, he now, as a suitable close of the whole, applies himself, by prayer, to the *God of peace*; that he, who alone is the author of it; who "creates" it where he pleaseth, would, through his instruction, give *rest and peace* to their minds.

*Note.* If this be the title of God; if this be his glory, that he is "the God of peace," how excellent and glorious is *that peace*, from whence he is so denominated, and which we have with himself, by Jesus Christ.

§3. "That brought again from the dead *our Lord Jesus*." All the work of God towards Jesus Christ, respected him as the *head of the church*, as our Lord and Savior; and thence alone have we an interest in

all the grace of it. Again, he is described by his *office*, under which consideration he was the *object* of the work mentioned; "that great Shepherd of the sheep," *he* who was promised to the church, and the object of its faith and hope, from the beginning; he who was looked for, prayed for, and who was now actually come as the Savior of his flock. He is said to be *great* on many accounts; in his *person*, in his *power* to preserve and save his flock; in his undertaking, and the effectual accomplishment of it; and his glorious exaltation. He is every way *incomparably great* and glorious.

*Note.* The safety, security, and consolation of the church much depend on this *greatness* of our Shepherd.

He is "the Shepherd of the sheep;" they are his own. He was promised and prophesied of, under the name of a Shepherd, Isa. xl, 11; Ezek. xxxiv, 23; chap. xxxvii, 24; and that which is signified hereby, is comprehensive of the *whole office* of Christ, as king, priest, and prophet of the church. For as a *Shepherd*, he feeds; that is, *rules* and *instructs* it; and being "that Shepherd who was to *lay down his life for the sheep*," John x, 11; he executes towards them his *priestly* office also. All the elect are committed to him of God, as *sheep* to a *shepherd*, to be redeemed and preserved, by virtue of his office. That which we are here principally taught is, that he "died in the discharge of his office," as the "great Shepherd of the sheep," which expresseth both the excellency of his love, and the certainty of the salvation of the elect.

The God of peace "brought him again from the dead." Herein consisteth his great acting towards the church, *as the God of peace*, and herein he laid the foundation for communicating unto us grace and peace. God, even the *Father*, is frequently said to

"raise Christ from the dead," because of his sovereign authority in the disposal of the whole work of redemption; and Christ is said to *raise himself*, or "to take his life again," when he was dead; because of the immediate efficacy of his divine person therein, John x, 18.

But somewhat more is intended, than that mere act of Divine power, whereby the human nature of Christ was quickened by a re-union of soul and body; a *moral* act of authority is also intended. The law being fulfilled and answered; the sheep being redeemed by the death of the Shepherd, the God of peace, to evidence that peace was now perfectly made, by an act of sovereign authority, brings him again into a state of life, completely delivered from the charge of the law. See Psal. xvi, 10, 11.

§4. "Through the blood of the everlasting covenant;" the covenant of *grace*, which is a transcript and effect of the covenant of redemption, called "*everlasting*," both in opposition to the covenant made at Sinai, which was but for a time, and accordingly was now removed; and because the effects of it are not temporary benefits, but everlasting mercies, grace, and glory. The blood of this covenant is the blood of Christ himself; which, as a *sacrifice* to God, confirmed the covenant; and which, as it was *sprinkled*, procured and communicates all the grace and mercy of the covenant to them, who are taken into the bond of it.

But how is God said to bring Christ from the dead, "through the blood of the covenant?" In reply, we remark, that the *death* of Christ, if he had not *risen*, would have not completed our redemption; we should have been *yet in our sins*. For then evidence would be given, that atonement was not made. The *bare resurrection* of Christ would not have saved us; for so

any other man may be raised by the power of God. But the "bringing again Christ from the dead, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*," gives assurance of the complete redemption and salvation of the church. Many expositors have filled this place with conjectures to no purpose, without so much as looking towards the mind of the Holy Ghost in the words.

§5. "Make you perfect," or rather, (κατεργασαι υμας) *make you meet*, fit, and able. This is what in yourselves you are no way fit and prepared for, whatever light, power, or liberty, you may be supposed to have; it is not *absolute perfection*, but a bringing of the mental faculties into due order, to *dispose, prepare, and enable* them, that they may work accordingly. "In every good work;" for every duty of obedience. In general, he designs the *application* of divine grace, through the mediation of Christ, for our sanctification, and the *daily increases* of it.

(Ποιων εν υμιν) "*working in you* that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ." This is the way—the *only way*—whereby we may be enabled effectually to do the will of God. The *efficiency* of actual grace for every acceptable act of obedience cannot be more directly expressed. *Through Jesus Christ*; which may be referred either to *working* or to *acceptance*. If to the *latter*, the meaning is, that the best of our duties are not accepted but upon the account of the merit and mediation of Christ, which is most true; but it is rather to be referred to the *former*, shewing that there is no communication of grace to us, from the peace of God, but by Jesus Christ, and by virtue of his mediation.

§6. "To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." The like ascription of glory, in the same kind of expression, is made to God, even the Father Phil. iv, 20,

"Now unto God and our *Father* be glory for ever and ever, amen." So 1 Tim. i, 17; 2 Tim. iv, 18. "So it is jointly to the Father and the Son as mediator, Rev. v, 13; See Gal. i, 5. And whereas this assignation of glory to Christ contains divine adoration and worship, with the ascription of glorious divine properties to him; the *object* of it is his divine person; and the *motive* unto it, the work of mediation. All *grace* is from him, and therefore all *glory* is to ascribed to him without intermission and without end. Hereunto is added the usual solemn note of assent and attestation, "*Amen*;" so it *is*, so *let* it be, so it *ought* to be; it is *true*, it is *right* and meet that so it should be.

Thus shall the whole dispensation of grace issue in the eternal glory of Christ. This the Father designed; this is the blessedness of the church to give him: and let every one who says not "*Amen*" to it, see that he be not "*anathema maranatha*."

§7. That which we learn from hence is,

1. That the bringing back of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Shepherd of the sheep, from the state of the dead, through the blood of the covenant, is the great pledge of assurance of peace with God, or the effecting of that peace, which "the God of peace" hath designed for the church.

2. The reduction of Christ from the dead by "the God of peace," is the spring and foundation of all dispensations and communications of grace to the church; of all the effects of the atonement and purchase made by his blood; for he was rought again, as the Shepherd of the sheep, to the exercise of his entire office towards the church.

3. All legal sacrifices issued in blood and death; but there was no *recovery* of any of them from that state,



no solemn pledge of their success. The only supply of their weakness was their frequent repetition.

4. There is then a blessed foundation laid for the communication of grace and mercy to the church, to the eternal glory of God.

§8. And to HIM doth the *poor, unworthy author of this exposition* desire in all humility to ascribe eternal praise and glory for all the mercy, grace, guidance, and assistance which he hath received from him in his endeavors therein. And if any thing, word, or expression, through weakness, ignorance, and darkness, which he yet *laboreth under*, have passed from him that do not tend to *his glory*, he doth here utterly condemn it. And he humbly prays, that if through his assistance, and the guidance of his Holy Spirit of light and truth, any thing hath been spoken aright concerning him—his office, sacrifice, grace, and his whole mediation—any light or direction communicated towards understanding the mind of the Holy Ghost in this glorious scripture—that he would make it abundantly *useful* and acceptable to his church.

And he doth also *humbly acknowledge* his power, goodness, and patience, in that, beyond all his expectations, he hath continued his life, under many weaknesses, temptations, sorrows, and tribulations, to bring this work to its end. “To HIM be glory for ever and ever, Amen.”

What follows are certain additional *postscripts*, which were usual with our apostle in his other epistles, of which we shall briefly give an account.

#### VERSES 22—25.

*And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in a few words. Know ye, that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you: and all the saints, they of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all, Amen.*

§1. The word of exhortation, what. §2. To suffer it, what. §3. In what sense a few words. §4 Timothy's imprisonment, and liberty. §5. Paul charges the brethren to salute the elders and saints in his name. §6. The salutation of the saints in Italy, to the Hebrews. §7. The general solemn close. §8. The subscription.

§1. "AND I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." He subjoins this tender address, to caution them against losing the benefit of it, through negligence or prejudice. (Τον λόγον της παρακλήσεως) *the word of exhortation or of consolation*; for it is used to signify both. Wherefore the phrase denotes, the truth and doctrine of the gospel applied to the edification of believers, whether by way of *exhortation* or *consolation*; the one constantly including the other.

Most think, that the apostle intends peculiarly, the *hortatory* part of the epistle, in chap. vi, 10, 12, 13. But I see no just reason, why the *whole epistle* may not be intended; for the nature of it in general is *par-tenetical*; that is, "a word of exhortation," as hath been often observed. The *whole* epistle is intended in the next words: "for I have written a letter unto you in a few words;" and there is in the *doctrinal* part of it, that which was as hard to be borne by the Hebrews as any thing in those which are preceptive or horta-tory. And I would not exclude the notion of *conso-lation*; because that is the proper effect of the doctrine of the gospel.

*Note.* When ministers take care, that the word which they deliver is a word tending to the edification and consolation of the church, they may, with confidence, press the entertainment of it by the people; though it should contain things, which, by reason of their weakness or prejudices, may be some way grievous to them.

§2. (Ανεχέσθε) *suffer*, or bear this word; that is, in

the first place, he cautions them to take heed that no prejudices, or inveterate opinions, no apprehensions of severity in its admonitions and threatenings, should provoke them against it, render them impatient under it, and so cause them to lose the benefit of it. But there is more intended, namely, that they should "bear and receive it, as a word of exhortation;" so as to improve it to their edification. A necessary caution; for neither Satan, nor the corruption of men's own hearts, will be wanting, to suggest to them such exceptions and prejudices against it, as may render it useless.

§3. "For I have written a letter unto you in few words;" for, considering the importance of the cause wherein he was engaged; the necessity there was to unfold the whole design and mystery of the covenant, and institutions of the law, with the office of Christ; considering the great contests that were amongst the Hebrews, about these things; and the danger either of their eternal ruin, through a misapprehension of them, all that he hath written may well be esteemed but a "few words;" and of which none could have been spared. He hath, in this matter sent them (*δια βραχυων*) a *brief compendium* of the doctrine of the law and the gospel.

§4. "Know ye, that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom if he come shortly, I will see you." Timothy was his perpetual companion in all his travels, labors, and sufferings; serving him as a son his father, unless when he sent him to any special work for the church: and being with him in *Judea*, he was well known there; as also his worth and usefulness. He seems not to have gone to Rome with Paul, when the latter was sent thither a prisoner, but probably followed him not long after; and there, as is most

likely, being taken notice of, either as an associate of the apostle's, or for preaching the gospel, he was cast into prison. Of this the Hebrews had heard, and were, no doubt, affected with it; therefore, the apostle gives them notice of his being *dismissed* out of prison, as a matter wherein he knew they would rejoice. The release of Timothy would be *good news* to them. He doth not seem to have been present with the apostle, at the despatch of this epistle, for he knew not his mind directly, about his going into Judea; only he apprehended that he had a resolution so to do. And herein he acquaints them with his *own* resolution, to give them a visit; which, that he might do, he had before desired their prayers for him. However, he seems to intimate that if Timothy, whose company he desired in his travels, could not come speedily, he knew not whether his work would permit him to do so. What was the event of this resolution God only knows.

§5. "Salute all them, that have the rule over you, and all the saints." This is given in charge to them *to whom* the epistle was sent. For though it was written *for the use* of the *whole church*, yet the messengers, by whom it was carried, delivered and committed it, according to the apostle's direction, to *some of the brethren* by whom it was to be presented and communicated to the church. To *these brethren* he peculiarly gives in charge to salute both their *elders*, and all the rest of the *saints*, or members of the church in his name. To "*salute*" in the name of another is to represent his kindness and affection; which the apostle desires, for the preservation and continuation of entire love between them. Who *these rulers* were, whom they are enjoined to salute, hath been fully declared, verse 17; and to call the *members* of the church "*saints*," was usual with our apostle.

§6. "They of Italy salute you." Those that ~~were~~ were with him in Italy; for there were then many Christians, both of Jews and Gentiles. Some of those, no doubt, were continually with the apostle; who knowing his design of sending a letter to the Hebrews, desired to be remembered to them, it being probable, that many of them were their countrymen, and well known to them.

§7. "Grace be with you all, Amen." This was the constant close of all his epistles. This he wrote with his *own hand*, and would have it esteemed an *assured token*, whereby an epistle might be known to be his, 2 Thes. iii, 17, 18. He varieth sometimes in his expressions; but this is the substance of all his subscriptions; "Grace be with you all. By "grace" he intends the whole good will of God by Jesus Christ, and all the blessed effects of it; and which he prays may be communicated to them.

§8. The *subscription* in our books is "written to the Hebrews, from Italy, by Timothy." This is partly *untrue*; as that it was sent by Timothy; being expressly contrary to what the apostle speaks concerning him immediately before. But these *subscriptions* have been sufficiently proved, by many, to be *spurious*; being the additions of some unskilful transcribers in after ages.

Τω Θεω δοξα.

# INDEX.

THE nature of an *expository* work precludes the necessity of referring in an Index to many things that otherwise would deserve a place. The Text itself will often be the easiest reference; and the Editor presumes, that the method he has adopted in summing up the contents of each verse or paragraph expounded, will save the inquisitive reader much time and trouble.

*N. B.* The first number refers to the *volume*—the second to the *page*.

- Abarinel, opposition of, to the sufferings of the Messiah, i, 124. His opinion of the anointed being cut off, 229. His confession concerning the 53d of Isaiah, 276.
- Abel, how the sacrifice and faith of, differed from Cain's, iv, 130.
- Ability, natural and moral, iii, 10.
- Abraham, separation of, for a double end, i, 99. The church confined to his person and posterity, ib. The father of the faithful, and heir of the world, 100.
- the ten trials of, ii, 374.
- receiving the blessing, observations on, iii, 284.
- the call of, containing two parts, iv, 157. His faith commended, 158. In what sense his life a life of faith, 165. The city he looked for, what, 168. His seed, how as the stars innumerable, 178. How he fulfilled God's command in offering Isaac, 198. His obedience amplified, 199. The support of his faith in that trial, 202.
- Abridgments, advantage of good, i, 2. Difficulty of making good ones, 3.
- Abridger, the duty of a faithful one, i, 4. Of this work, his principal endeavor, what, 6.
- Adam, the sin of, its effects, i, 122, 125.
- Adulterers, their doom, iv, 410.
- Affections, natural, how mortified by faith, iv, 189. When overpowered, by faith, an evidence of sincerity, 206.
- Αγωναζωμενος, its import, iii, 292.
- Agony, of Christ, explained, iii, 45.
- Agrippa, not the anointed cut off, i, 229.
- Albinus, the state of the church about the beginning of his government, i, 90.
- Allegorical expositions, ii, 357.
- Altar, the Christian, what, iv, 438.
- Ambrose, a remark of, i, 311.
- Analogy, of faith, its use in interpreting scripture, ii, 519.
- Ananus, his cruelty to St. James, i, 90.
- Angelical motions, how distinguished from the motions of the Holy Ghost, ii, 130.
- Angels, the aggravation of their apostasy, i, 130.
- our conceptions of, must be regulated by scripture, ii, 88. Their chief glory wherein it consists, 123. The particular ends of their ministry, 127.
- Anti-christian state, the season of its continuance, ii, 378.
- Antiochus, Epiphanes, what called by the Jews, i, 106.
- Απαιρησις, remarks on, ii, 41.
- Αποληνται, remarks on, ii, 106.
- Apostasy, the special evil of, ii, 409. From the gospel, is a departure from the living God, 419. In the greatest, God has some faithful ones, 450.
- Appearance, of Christ, iii, 642. To whom, and for what end, 643.
- Apinas, Thomas, his reason why the scripture is called canonical, i, 50.
- Archimandrite, who, ii, 383.
- Aristotle, his definition of law, 50.
- Armillus, some account of, i, 181, 184.
- Arminianism, opposed by Dr. Owen, i, 16.
- Artaxerxes, Longimanus, the decree of, referred to by Daniel's prophecy, i, 243.
- Aso, Rabbi, compiler of the Babylonish Talmud, i, 111.
- Assemblies, why so much forsaken, iv, 66.
- Assistance, special seasons requiring, ii, 584.
- Assurance, to retain, the utmost diligence necessary, iii, 212.
- Attendance, on the word, necessary to perseverance, ii, 138.
- Atonement, the doctrine of, the life and spirit of religion, iii, 57.

- Austin, St. his remark on the sacred writers, i, 62.
- Authority of God, the ground of faith, ii, 80. The formal reason of our obedience, 351.
- B
- Backslidings, the very appearance of, to be shunned, ii, 477. Their beginnings hardly discoverable, 557. A preservative against, 559.
- Baptism, not regeneration, iii, 458.
- Abuses of, ib.
- how represented by Noah's ark, iv, 151.
- Baptisms, doctrine of, what, iii, 124.
- Barrabas*, the meaning of, iii, 572.
- Barchocbeba, a false Messiah, i, 178.
- Barlow, Bishop, his friendship to Dr. Owen, i, 35, and last conference with him, ib.
- Barrenness, under the gospel, its danger, iii, 182.
- Basil, St. an excellent saying of, ii, 48. Another, 337.
- Bates, Dr. his character in brief by Mr. Hervey, i, 34. Note.
- Bechai, Rabbi, his distribution of the law, i, 104.
- Believers, the duty of, to rejoice in the glory of Jesus Christ, ii, 96. How related to one another, 287. On what account the house of God, 326. What required of them, as being in the house, 327. Their happy state under the gospel, 495. Their privileges not lessened by the gospel, 535.
- Believing, whether the duty of sinners, ii, 450. The mystery of, consists in mixing the truth and faith in the mind, 480.
- Bembus, Petrus, censured, i, 60.
- Ben-Uzziel, his gloss on Jacob's prophecy, i, 203.
- Berith, constantly rendered by *diablos*, i, 96. Various used, 328.
- remarks on, iii, 503, 614, 615.
- Bernard, St. a saying of, about understanding St. Paul's writings, i, 85.
- Biblists, who so called, i, 117.
- Biddle, John, Socinian catechisms published by, i, 24.
- Blessings, sacerdotal, how authoritative, iii, 285, 317. The acts of superiors, 277. The kinds of, 118.
- patriarchal, what, iv, 210.
- Grotius's mistake concerning them, 211. Of parents, 210. Of ministers, 211.
- Blood of Christ, all of it necessary, iii, 74. Its purifying efficacy, 597. A ground of triumph to faith, 602.
- shed, all innocent, has a voice, iv, 134. Of Christ, the only security from destruction, 244.
- Brenius, betrayed the doctrines of Christianity, i, 140. Note.
- Brentius, a remark of, concerning the scriptures, i, 56.
- Buckingham, the Duke of, i, 29.
- Buxtorf, his treatise on the Massoretic distinctions, i, 107.
- C
- Cajetan, scruples of, as to the epistle to the Hebrews, i, 54.
- Call, an ordinary, to the ministry, wherein it consists, iii, 26.
- Canonical, whence the term derived, i, 49. Marks to distinguish what books are, 50.
- Camero, refuted by Spanhemius, i, 72.
- Catalogue, a complete, of Dr. Owen's works, i, 44.
- Cerinthus, gave occasion to the writing of St. John's gospel, i, 66.
- Chaiah, Rabbi Jacob, collected the observations of the Massorites, i, 107.
- Charles II, his civility to Dr. Owen, i, 34.
- Charnock, his character in brief by Mr. Hervey, i, 34. Note.
- Chastisement, observations on, iv, 312.
- Children, the minds of, well-principled, a blessed thing, iv, 235.
- Christ, the priesthood of, 297, the kingdom or lordship of, 358.
- superior to Moses, ii, 11.
- The only revealer of the Father's will, 32. The Father perpetually present with, 74. His regalia, 93. His enemies, 113. The head of his people, 187. His inconceivable love, 200. His exaltation, a pledge of final glory to believers, 202. How he leads his church to glory, 214. His judging omniscience, 216, 558. The frame of his heart after his sufferings, 256. God and man in one person, 262. His atonement for sin necessary for reconciliation, 273. Consideration of, the most effectual means to free men from error, 295. Worthy of all glory, 313. To be divinely worshipped, 316.
- a priest, and not of the tribe of Levi, how, iii, 28. A discovery of, to convinced sinners, 268. No Savior without an oblation, 446. A Mediator of a better covenant, 464.

- Christians, warned to leave Jerusalem, i, 92. Why unwilling to leave it, 93.
- Χρηστολογία, Dr. Owen's, its character, i, 32.
- Chrysostom, St. a rule of, ii, 40. Sayings of, 44, 48.
- an observation of, ili, 10. A pertinent remark of, 172.
- Church, the same in substance in every age, i, 102.
- its immediate dependence on Christ, ii, 187.
- its building, a great and glorious work, iii, 329. Never loses any privilege once granted, 362.
- more honorable in all its troubles than any other society, iv, 236.
- Churches, the schools of Christ, iii, 96.
- City of Jerusalem, not sought by Abraham, iv, 168. Of God, its glorious privileges, 400. Believers have none on earth, in what sense, 410.
- Clarkson, his funeral sermon for Dr. Owen, i, 40.
- Clemens, Romanus, not the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, i, 70, nor translator, 96.
- Alexandrinus, a mistake of, i, 70, 75.
- Command of God, either vocal or interpretative, ii, 84.
- Communion with God, Dr. Owen's publication called, i, 24.
- Compassion, of Christ, iii, 10. Observations on, 17.
- Computation, of Daniel's weeks, i, 231.
- Conant, Dr. succeeds Dr. Owen as Vice Chancellor, i, 24.
- Concupiscence, evil, what called by the Jews, i, 125. Good, what, according to the Jews, 127.
- Condensation, the great, of God, illustrated, ii, 192.
- Confession of sin, the causes and end of evangelical, iv, 15. Inseparable from faith, 255.
- Confidence of hope, wherein consists, ii, 327.
- Congregational plan of discipline, preferred by Dr. Owen, i, 18.
- Consecrated things, the use of, how ceased, iii, 309.
- Consequences, deducible from scripture assertions, ii, 74.
- Consolation of believers, how provided for, iii, 262.
- Conviction of sin, the great surprisal of, iii, 267.
- Covenant transactions, between Father and Son, i, 327.
- the mutual in-being of its promises and threatenings, ii, 498.
- the new, its stability depends on the suretyship of Christ, iii, 390. Between God and man, established on promises, 467. Nature of the Mosaic, and now distinguished from all others, 469. None effectual, but what is confirmed in Christ, 500. Of grace, its nature and properties, 503. The foundation of a church state, 633.
- token of the, received in infancy, its advantage, iv, 235.
- Covetousness, the evil of, iv, 388.
- Counsels, the divine, their nature, i, 308.
- Creation, the first, subservient to the glory of Christ, ii, 33. Its dependence on Christ, 53. The stage of his grace, 55. Deeply concerned in Christ's incarnation, 83. Its perishing state, how to be improved, 107.
- Creatures, how used to the glory of God, ii, 37.
- Cyrril, his excellent observations, iii, 539.
- Cyrus, his decree not intended by Daniel, i, 240.
- D.
- Daniel, his prophecy explained and vindicated, i, 217.
- Darius, three of that name, i, 241.
- Data in theology, what, i, 393.
- Death, allowed by the Jews to be penal, i, 124.
- the fear of, inseparable from sin, ii, 255. Of Christ, how victorious, 258.
- in what respect penal, iii, 617.
- a peculiar season, when it is near, iv, 215.
- Decalogue, substance of the, iii, 552.
- Decrees of God, the most reasonable way of considering them, ii, 37.
- Deliverer, two things necessary to qualify him, i, 139.
- Desire of all nations, a name of the Messiah, i, 211.
- what kind of, should possess ministers, iii, 209. Whence it proceeds, ib.
- Despondency, how to be avoided, iv, 335.
- Destruction of gospel contemners, unavoidable, ii, 169.



- of barren professors, ordinarily by degrees, iii, 187.
- See*, governing an accusative, and a genitive, ii, 204, 205.
- Diligence, the great importance of, ii, 434.
- in duty, expressly required from professors, iii, 210, 213. Remarks on, 228.
- Distrust of God, a provoking sin, ii, 381.
- Doctrines, all should be practically improved, ii, 283.
- should be seasonably administered, iii, 128. Some may be omitted for a season, 130.
- strange observations on, iv, 436.
- Dogs, two brazen ones made by the wise men, i, 281. *Note*.
- Dominion of Christ, extends to all persons, and all things, i, 358.
- believer's duty to rejoice in the, ii, 96.
- Duties, the fruit of faith and obedience, acceptable to God, iii, 178.
- Duty, an heroic spirit necessary to carry us through it, iv, 241. Defect in it will make men lame in their profession, 336.
- E.
- Ebionites, their treatment of St. Paul and his writings, i, 52.
- Egyptian, account of the Grecian empire, i, 235.
- Elias, Rabbi, a tradition of his about the age of the world, i, 251.
- Elohim, remarks on, ii, 80.
- Eloquence, sacred, wherein it consists, i, 61.
- Encouragement, our need of, iii, 379.
- End of God in the work of Providence, ii, 388.
- Enemies of Christ, their end, ii, 119.
- of the church, remarks on, iv, 45. Apostates the worst, of 85.
- Eniedinus scrupled the authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews, i, 54. His sophistical cavil, 313. His exceptions against a plurality of persons in the Divine nature, refuted, 319. His confidence re-proved, 326.
- an error of, iv, 428.
- Enech, why not joined with Elias at Christ's transfiguration, iv, 135.
- Enneaphanes*, its false interpretation, confuted, ii, 261.
- Epistle to the Hebrews, its authority by whom, and why scrupled, i, 54. Supposed by some to be written in Hebrew, disproved, 73, 93. What effect it had on the professing Hebrews, 63. Not translated by Clemens, 94. Abounds with Greek elegancies, ib. Is freer from hebraisms than could be expected in a translation, ib.
- Erasmus scrupled the authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews, i, 54. Ascribes it to Clemens Romanus, refuted, 73.
- a mistake of, iv, 425.
- Error in heart, what meant by it, ii, 445. The root of all provoking sins, 394.
- Esau, his birth-right what, iv, 346. How sold, 347. He was rejected, 350. Found no place of repentance, ib.
- Eternity, men under their trial for, iii, 181.
- Esma*, its meaning in reference to Christ, ii, 21.
- Erymanthus-Dives*, its meaning, iv, 266.
- Evangelized, to be, a signal privilege, ii, 478.
- Evasions of the Jews answered, i, 246.
- Evidences of a real union with Christ, ii, 431.
- of a thriving spiritual state, iii, 105.
- Exaltation, the glory of Christ's priestly office depends on it, iii, 435. Christ's Divine nature incapable of it, ib.
- Examination, our duty after hearing the word, iii, 87.
- Examples of our forefathers to be duly considered, ii, 368.
- Exhortations, to be multiplied in times of temptation, ii, 348. How to be managed, 349. To be influenced by Divine authority, ib. Mutual, how to be performed, 425.
- Experience, how learnt by obedience, iii, 67. Of Divine truth, what, 102.
- Exposition, Dr. Owen's, of the Epistle to the Hebrews, its character from memoirs of his life, i, 30.
- F.
- Faith, how mixed with truth, ii, 480. How assisted in mixing the word, 483. Puts love on work, 485.
- towards God, what, iii, 114. The importance of it, 138. Its formal object, 492. The ground of its triumph, 602.
- gives a present subsistence to things future, how, iv, 115. What sort of, will carry us

- through difficulties, 118. A definition of, *ib.* By it objections against invisible things are refuted, *ib.* Brings into the soul an experience of their power, 119. A means of preserving believers in the profession of the gospel, *ib.* As an instrument, includes its object, 121. Of Abel and Cain, wherein it differed, 129. May be shaken, but not overcome, 175. Its duty about temporal mercies, *ib.* Its formal object in the promises, what, 175. Looks on heaven, 195. In all ages the same, 235. Highly rational in all its obedience, 238. Nothing insuperable to, when rightly engaged, 241.
- Father, God the, with respect to the order of subsistence, *ii.*, 51.
- Fear of God, the several sorts of, *ii.*, 463. The proper object of gospel comminations, 473.
- Federal transactions between the Father and the Son, *i.*, 327.
- Fiat lux, some account of, *i.*, 25.
- Figment of the heart, moral corruption so called, *i.*, 125.
- First-born, why is Christ so called, *ii.*, 77.
- Flavel, his character in brief by Mr. Hervey, *i.*, 34. *Note.*
- Fleetwood, Charles, Dr. Owen's letter to, *i.*, 36.
- Flesh; applied to Christ signifies what, *iii.*, 37.
- Fornication, a caveat against, *iv.*, 316.
- G.
- Galgai, what, *i.*, 185.
- Gemara, compiled by Rabbi Ase, *i.*, 111.
- Gemarists, some of them hold the perfection of the written law, *i.*, 114.
- Γενεαλογίαι, its meaning cleared, *iii.*, 292, 316.
- Genealogy of Christ vindicated, *i.*, 261.
- Gibbons, Dr. his version of the Latin epitaph, for Dr. Owen, *i.*, 42.
- Gifts, their order and subserviency, *i.*, 374.
- Gilbert, Mr. the author of the Latin epitaph for Dr. Owen, *i.*, 11.
- Glory of Christ, meditations on the, its character, *i.*, 33.
- God, in what sense the God of Christ, *ii.*, 94. His greatness illustrated by the visible creation, 192. His love and grace in the person of Christ, a matter of eternal admiration, 197. His presence alone the rule of desire, 400. His voice heard by many to no profit, 449. Why he preserves a remnant for himself, 451. Displeased with nothing in this world but sin, 452.
- what implied in his being such to any, 514.
- what implied in believing that he is, *iv.*, 144.
- Godfrey, Sir Edmund, *i.*, 36.
- Goodwin, Mr. John his redemption redeemed, *i.*, 24. Dr. his character in brief by Mr. Hervey, 34. *Note.*
- Gospel, its doctrines to be improved for faith and obedience, *ii.*, 285. Its mysteries require diligent consideration, 288. No new doctrine, 479.
- the word of righteousness, in what sense, *iii.*, 100. The word of the, is spiritual food, 104. Time, a season of trial for eternity, 181. Barrenness under the, attended with an increase of sin, 182.
- Gouge, Mr. Thomas, his book on charity, *iii.*, 205. *Note.*
- Grace, season thereof to be improved, *ii.*, 358.
- its efficacy in calling men, *iv.*, 160.
- Griffith, Mr. John, his attestation, *i.*, 28.
- Grotius, supposes Luke to be author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, refuted, *i.*, 71. His mistake, 310.
- H.
- Haggai, his prophecy concerning the glory of the second house, *i.*, 205.
- Hana, Rabbi, an expression of his, 280.
- Hartop, Sir John, a letter to, *i.*, 40.
- Hasmoneans, the time of their rule, *i.*, 235.
- Hearing the word, the duty of Christians, *iii.*, 83.
- Heart, its error, what, *ii.*, 394.
- Heavens, what the shaking of them intends, *iv.*, 391.
- Hebrews Epistle to the, strictly canonical, *i.*, 51. By whom opposed, 52. The judgment of the Latin church, concerning it, *ib.* Objections against it answered, 54. The

- canonical authority, of it demonstrated, 56. Knowledge of the penman not necessary, 69. St. Paul was the author of it, 70. Why it is unsubscribed, 78. The time it was written, 89. The occasion and success of it, 94. The language of it was originally written in, 95. Not translated from the Hebrew by Clemens, 96.
- Meinsius, his severe censure on those who find fault with anything in scripture, i, 60.
- Herod, the whole revenue of, scarce sufficient to supply Solomon's workmen with bread, i, 208.
- Hervey, his character of the puritan divines, i, 34. *Note.*
- Holy Spirit, discourse on the, by Dr. Owen, i, 32.
- continues to speak to us in scripture, ii, 350.
- Hope, degrees in, iii, 211. The Christian's anchor, 268, 269.
- Horsley, Dr. strictures on, i, 389.
- Hospitality, a Christian duty recommended, iv, 402. A peculiar reason for it, ib.
- House the glory of the latter, what, i, 206, 210.
- Howe, his character in brief by Mr. Hervey, i, 34. *Note.*
- Hyde, Lord Chancellor, his opinion of Dr. Owen, i, 26.
- J
- Jacob, his prophecy respecting the time of the Messiah's coming, i, 196.
- his faith in blessing the sons of Joseph, iv, 212. Why this particular of his faith selected, ib.
- Jarchi, Rabbi Solomon, his words plain and remarkable, i, 326. *Note.*
- Idolatry of the Jews, under the first temple, i, 247.
- Jealousy, Godly, how a duty, ii, 413. Holy, what, 414.
- Jehovah, the name how called by the cabalists, i, 280.
- Jerome, St. a remark of his concerning Marcion and others, i, 52. His opinion of the wisdom of Solomon, 67.
- the state of his mind when a hermit, ii, 383.
- Jerusalem, heavenly, believers come to it, iv, 370. The privileges of it, 371.
- Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah, i, 257. The characteristic notes concerning the Messiah agree all in him, 258. The Jew's pretence concerning his miracles monstrous, 280. *Note.*
- remarks on the name, ii, 521.
- the Mediator of the new covenant, iv, 400. The altar of the church, 437.
- Jews, their mistake about the promise and covenant, i, 101. Their present notion of the written word, and oral tradition, 103. The means whereby they expect to be saved, 140. Their expectations at the birth of Christ, 175. The faith of their forefathers lost among them, ib. Why the Messiah was rejected by them, 177. Two Messiahs in expectation by them, 181. The causes of their unbelief, 188. Their confession concerning the glory they saw at Rome, 193. Modern, their evasions answered, 246.
- remarkable sayings of theirs, ii, 34, 216, 354, 445.
- in aggravation of their present misery, iii, 422.
- Ignorance, our calamity and sin, iii, 19.
- Illumination, spiritual, iii, 561.
- Imitation of good men, iii, 234.
- Imposition of hands, iii, 125.
- Institutions of the gospel, their importance, ii, 419.
- observations on Divine, iii, 351.
- Arbitrary observations on, 534.
- Of Divine worship, to be inquired with diligence, 566.
- Intercession of Christ, iii, 401.
- Three ways typified under the Old Testament, 402. The ground of consolation, 410.
- Johannan, Rabbi, compiler of the Jerusalem Talmud, i, 111.
- Joseph, instances of his faith, iv, 216.
- Joy, in what sense set before Jesus, iv, 297.
- Isaac, the faith of, iv, 209. Wherein deficient, wherein right, ib.
- Judah, Rabbi, author of the Mishna, i, 110.
- Judgment, the last, its nature and evidence, iii, 118.
- Julian, his notion of the scriptures, ii, 397.
- Justice, of God, required the punishment of sin, i, 342. Not contrary to mercy, 348.
- satisfaction demanded by, ii, 211, 229.
- K
- Karzi, hold that the law is perfect,

- i, 114. Reproved for it by their Jewish brethren, 117.  
*Κατασχῆσαι* the import of, ii, 329.  
*Κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος*, the meaning of, ii, 329.  
 — *φύραις*, the signification of, ib.  
 Kingdom of Christ its laws righteous and holy, ii, 98.  
*Κληρονομία* its true meaning in regard to Christ, ii, 15.  
 Knowledge of God, observations on, iii, 524.  
*Κραυγὴ ἰσχυρὰ*, the meaning of, explained, iii, 41.
- L
- Λαλῶντας*, the signification of, when applied to Abel, iv, 132.  
 Lane, John Vincent, author of *Fiat lux*, 25.  
 Last days, their true import, ii, 5.  
 Laud, Archbishop, his imposition of superstitious rites on the university of Oxford, i, 13.  
 Law, the different parts of it, i, 142.  
 Moral, cannot justify us, ib. Of sacrifices, cannot, 143, 144.  
 — wherein it agrees with, and differs from the gospel, ii, 4.  
 — how abrogated, iii, 365.  
 — terror attending the promulgation of the, iv, 386.  
 Letter, a peace-making one, i, 39.  
 To Sir John Hartop, 40.  
 Levi, Mr. David, a letter to him, i, 401.  
 Life of Christ in heaven threefold, iii, 400.  
 Lindanus, an observation of his on the authority of the Scriptures, i, 51.  
 Lipman, his thought of Adam's sin, i, 124.  
*Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, remarks on, ii, 54.  
 Love of Christ in delivering us from sin, ii, 58. Of God, how admirable, 193. Of Christ, how great, 200.  
 — of Christ, contemplation of the, iii, 66. Its excellence, 195, 218. Among believers, a fruit of the spirit of holiness, 197. Cautions against the hinderances of it, 202. The most powerful oppositions to it, 204. Its great trial, 227.  
 — brotherly, recommended and enjoined, iv, 402.  
 Lovelace, Lord, Dr. Owen his chaplain, i, 14.  
 Luke, St. supposed by some, to be the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, i, 71.
- M
- Marchir, Rabbi, a saying of, i, 280.  
 Maimonides, his notion of the Messiah and his kingdom, 186.  
 — a saying of, ii, 17.  
 Man, made for eternity, ii, 108.  
 Manesse Ben Israel, Rabbi, his account of original sin, i, 127. His opinion of the anointed cut off, 229. The opinion of about the Messiah's reign, 187.  
*Μακάριος*, the import of, iii, 63.  
 Marriage, what, honorable, iv, 413.  
 Massora, what, i, 106.  
 Means, are sometimes given without effectual grace, ii, 389.  
 Mediator, the difference between such and a surety, iii, 381. His office, 462. A definition of the term, ib.  
 Melchisedec, was the first priest, i, 301. Was a sacrificer, ib.  
 — and his priesthood, iii, 272.  
 — Whether a mere man, 273. His descent not recorded, why, 292.  
 — Wherein typical of Christ, 295.  
 Menahem, Rabbi, a remarkable saying of, concerning the sin of Adam, i, 124.  
 Merchants, Solomon's, ii, 289.  
 Mercy, that it hinders the exercise of justice, confuted, i, 344. And justice, properties of the Divine nature, 349.  
 Messiah the first promise of the, i, 145. But a few times denotes the promised seed in the Old Testament, 153. Frequently occurs in the Targums, 154. Why called an angel, 173. Truths spoken of him mysterious, yet reconciled, 178. Ben Joseph, or Ephraim, his story a talmudical romance, 181. Ben David, ib. A Jewish tradition about his suffering, 182, 275. One expected as a deliverer by the Jews, 183. Maimonides's notion of the, and of his kingdom, 186. A sum of the Jewish creed concerning him, 187, 193. His coming determined by the prophecy of Jacob, 196; of Haggai, 205; of Malachi, 216; of Daniel, 218. The Jews tradition about the time of his birth, 251. That he came within the limited time, 258. That no other during that season came, 259.  
 Method, its advantage, i, 5.  
*Μετάνοιαν*, the signification of, iii, 10.

- Michael, Mr. Dr. Owen's father-in-law, i, 38.
- Milton, his description of hell, iv, 359.
- Ministers, of the Word, to guard against negligence, ii, 30. Their honor, whence, 310. Unfaithful, worthy of contempt, 312. The greatest but servants, 332.
- their desire to profit their people, iii, 209. Their duty, 218. Their maintenance, 309.
- Mirandus Picus, his observation on the excellency of the scriptures, i, 63.
- Mishna, what, i, 110.
- Monica, St. Austin's mother, how she discerned Divine revelation, i, 85.
- Moravians, its import, ii, 77.
- Morality, not enough for a Christian, iii, 57.
- Moses, the prophet, his privileges above other prophets, ii, 11. The glory of, wherein it consisted, 121.
- the body of, what signified thereby, iii, 458.
- his parents' faith, iv, 224. The means of his attaining the knowledge of his descent, 229. The faith and choice of, 230. His faith in forsaking Egypt, 238.
- Mysteries require an attentive consideration, ii, 288. The scripture an inexhaustible repository of, 516. Means for understanding them, 517.
- in scripture, require our diligence, iii, 81. Should be insisted on by ministers, 81, 143. An appetite for them, 105.
- N
- Nachman, Rabbi Moses Bar, his Exposition, i, 173. His apprehension of the Messiah, 174.
- Nazarenes and Ebionites, strictures on the, i, 397.
- Noah, how he condemned the world, iv, 152. How he became an heir of righteousness, *ib.*
- O
- Oath of God, engaged against unbelief, ii, 459.
- Oath, solemn, lawful, iii, 244.
- Obedience, formal reason of, ii, 351. Stable and permanent foundation thereof, 352.
- of Christ, what, iii, 61. When acceptable, 67. A practical experience of, *ib.*
- blind, iv, 206.
- Occumenius, his reason for supposing that Paul was not the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, confuted, i, 74.
- Offering of Christ inseparable from his suffering, iii, 648.
- Offices of Christ, their efficacy depend on his dignity, iii, 600.
- Old Testament examples, their use, ii, 355.
- Onkelos, his explication of Jacob's prophecy, i, 203.
- Only-begotten, its genuine import in reference to Christ, ii, 68.
- Opinions, human, insufficient guides, i, 887. Diversity of, 394. How to avoid erroneous ones, 395.
- Origen supposed Luke to be the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, i, 70. An observation of his concerning the necessity of the incarnation of the Son of God, 308.
- Owen, Lewis, Dr. Owen's ancestor, some account of him, i, 10. *Note.* Henry, Dr. Owen's father, his character, 11. *Note.* Dr. his character in brief by Mr. Hervey, 33. *Note.*
- P
- Paras*, its meaning ascertained, ii, 5.
- Paroys*, remarks on, iv, 375.
- Papists, their agreement with the Jews about tradition, i, 115.
- Παλαίστρια*, its import, ii, 422.
- Παλαίστριον*, the signification of, examined, ii, 132.
- Parents, how may they bless their children, iii, 323.
- Paul, St. an admirable example to the dispensers of the gospel, ii, 286.
- Payne, Mr. his conversation with Dr. Owen, i, 36.
- Penalties annexed to the gospel, a motive to value it, ii, 153.
- People of God, remarks on the phrase, ii, 530.
- Perfection of church state and worship, wherein it consists, iii, 331.
- Perfections of the Deity, all belong to the person of Christ, ii, 50.
- Perseverance of the saints, character of Dr. Owen's book so called, i, 24.
- Persian empire, continuance of it, i, 233.
- Person of Christ, the glory of it, ii, 50. As incarnate, 52.

- importance of faith in the, iii, 309.
- Personal transactions in the Holy Trinity, i, 309. Distinctions in God, 317.
- Petavius, his computation of Daniel's weeks, i, 236.
- Peter, the apostle, his testimony for the epistle to the Hebrews being written by St. Paul, i, 82.
- Phaeton, who compared to, ii, 304.
- Philo, the supposed author of the Wisdom of Solomon, i, 67. His perplexity in accounting for God speaking of himself in the plural number, 312.
- Pilgrimage, what constitutes it, iv, 166.
- Πολυμυα*, its import considered, ii, 7.
- Poverty, remarks on, iii, 226.
- Prayer, a Jewish one, i, 143.
- Preaching, ought to be seasonable, iii, 128. And diligently attended to, 177.
- Prejudices of the Jews obviated by St. Paul, ii, 11.
- Πρω*, its import as applied to God, ii, 204.
- Priest, the signification of the term, i, 300. Every proper is ordained to act for other men. 304.
- Priesthood, the importance of it, i, 299. And sacrifice, indissolubly related, 303. Of Christ, the necessity of it, 338.
- of Christ, a great encouragement to believers, ii, 574.
- change of the, iii, 347. Of Christ, its perpetuity, how important, 396.
- Priestly, Dr. a letter to, i, 383. What he thinks a good guide for discovering the true sense of scripture, 386. His method shewn to be fallacious, *ib.* A singular declaration of his, 395. Animadverted on, 396. His charge against St. Paul answered, 397.
- Priestly office, its glory depended on the exaltation of Christ, iii, 435.
- Priests, high, their number under the law, iii, 393. Remarks on those under the law and gospel, 431.
- Principles, first, what, iii, 97.
- Privileges, the disposal of, entirely with God, iii, 500.
- Profaneness, observations on, iv, 344.
- Professors, barren, righteous in God to deliver them up, iii, 184.
- Progress in knowledge, why necessary, iii, 130.
- Promise of the Messiah, under the notion of a covenant, i, 98.
- how a general and eternal rule, iii, 470.
- Promises, the mistake of the Jews in regard to them, i, 97. How to be interpreted, 283. All of them consistent with the Christian religion, 287.
- it is of great consequence to have them left us, ii, 475. The failure of men doth not make them to cease, 476. The faithfulness of God in them not to be measured by the faith or obedience of men, 508. Observations on the, 509.
- delayed, a great exercise to faith, iv, 110.
- Properties of God in Christ, a matter of consolation to believers, ii, 107.
- Prophet, the Messiah promised to be one, i, 272. The character belongs to Jesus, 273.
- Christ, a greater than Moses, ii, 10.
- Prophets, how proved to be such, i, 69.
- Προφητα*, its meaning, ii, 140.
- Προφητια*, its acceptations, ii, 76.
- Providence, the works of instructive, ii, 385, their end, 388.
- Prudence, to be used by the dispensers of the gospel, ii, 286.
- Punishments, the effects of vindictive justice, ii, 158. No place will secure us against, 383.
- Purgatory, an invention of Satan, iii, 182.
- Purification, how applied to heavenly things, iii, 638.
- Puritans, the principal writers of the, briefly characterized by Mr. Hervey, i, 34. *Note.*
- Purpose of God in salvation, its wisdom, iii, 261. Consistent with general offers, 264.
- Q
- Quintilian, his remarks on *prosopopeias*, i, 319.
- R
- Rabbins, a saying concerning their authority, i, 181.
- Rainbow, Bishop, against the conventicle bill, i, 31.

- Rational divines, Dr. Owen's remark on some being so called, i, 32.
- Reason, its use in the articles of faith, ii, 488.
- Reconciliation, how necessary, ii, 273.
- Redemption, the sovereignty of, 263.
- Redemption, what included therein, iii, 584.
- Repentance, its nature, iii, 110. Its necessity, 134.
- Rest of God what, ii, 465. Wherein it consists, 467. Entering into, what, 487. How it both precedes and follows work, 499. The day of, altered under the gospel, 538. All true, only in Christ, 523.
- Rests, the nature of several explained, ii, 491.
- Resurrection, how a fundamental principle, iii, 140.
- Revelation, is eminently from the Father, ii, 26. Gradual, a fruit of Divine wisdom, 30. Of the Gospel, its perfection, 32. What a powerful motive to attend to it, 145.
- Reynolds, Bishop, succeeds Dr. Owen in his deanery, i, 25.
- Righteousness of God, what, i, 339. Requires the punishment of sin, 342.
- Roman church, not the proposer of canonical authority, i, 53.
- Rulers, church obedience to, enjoined, iv, 416.
- S.
- Sabbath, doctrine of the, discussed, ii, 529. Evangelical, first day of the week, 539.
- Sacraments, their use, iii, 458.
- Sacrifices, their nature and end, i, 306.
- Salvation, impossible, but by the self-sacrifice of Christ, ii, 56. The gospel, how a great one, 165.
- Salus electorum, its character, i, 19.
- in what sense is Christ the author of, iii, 72. In what sense eternal, 73.
- Sanctification, its necessity, ii, 241.
- Satan, the curse after the fall respects him principally, i, 150.
- his power over death, what, and wherein it consisteth, ii, 250.
- Scaliger, his account of Daniel's weeks, i, 242.
- Schlichtingius, a gloss of, refuted, iv, 428.
- Schurman, Anna Maria, Dr. Owen's correspondence with her, i, 35.
- Scripture, every thing in it instructive, ii, 39, 445. Compared with itself, 96. A firm ground of faith and divine worship, 504. Directions to search it for our advantage, 517.
- the proper way of interpreting, iv, 186.
- Scripturists, who, i, 117.
- Seasons, special, how to be observed and improved, ii, 338.
- Selucidæ, the time of their reign in Syria, i, 235.
- Self-denial, the foundation of sincere profession, iv, 161.
- Self-examination, the duty of all professors, iii, 224.
- Sepher Ikkarin, remarkable words in, i, 272.
- Shilo, the term explained, i, 199. Proved to be the Messiah, 202.
- Simeon, the son of Hillel, why the latter Jews exclude him from their roll, i, 109.
- Sin and punishment entering the world, i, 122. The immediate effects of it, *ib.* The imputation of it held by some of the Jews, 125. Original, variously called by the Jews, 126. How long it continues, 127. Could not be pardoned without satisfaction, 345.
- its real demerit, ii, 160. Its horrid nature, 233. Its aggravation from the multitude joining, 370. No place can ward off, 383. Persisted in, its aggravation, 395. How to administer an antidote against, 418.
- degrees of, iii, 18.
- its gall and poison, what, iv, 84. How to form a right judgment of its demerit, 89. The mortification of, the best preparation for trials, 296.
- Sinai, why chosen for the promulgation of the law iv, 256.
- Sinners, subject to death as it is penal, ii, 253. Exemplary, made exemplary in punishment, 433.
- Sion, believers come to, iv, 368.
- Skilfulness in the word of righteousness, what, iii, 101.
- Slothfulness, in hearing the word, iii, 213, 213. Its ruinous tendency, 230.
- Smalcus Valentinus, i, 24.

- Socinian notion of Christ being taken to heaven, ii, 13.  
 — notion of Christ's oblation, refuted, iii, 580. Of his redemption, 586.  
 — conjecture refuted, iv, 30.  
 Socinians, their exposition of Christ making the worlds, ii, 23. Their cavils against the glory of Christ, refuted, 101. A false gloss of theirs refuted, 261.  
 — deny an expiatory sacrifice, iii, 56. Their notion of Christ's intercession, disproved, 401. Offer violence to common sense, 584.  
 Socinus, his doctrine relative to justice and mercy, refuted, i, 348. Against Christ undergoing the penalty due to us, refuted, 350.  
 Socinus, his impious assertion, that Christ was offered for himself, disproved, iii, 428; that there was no promise of life under the Old Testament, disproved, 479.  
 Solidians, who, iii, 225.  
 Son of God, often appeared to the Patriarchs, i, 171.  
 — of God, his excellency and glory, ii, 17. His eternal generation, 51. A signal name appropriated to Christ, 67. Only begotten, 77. Of God, what is understood thereby, 578.  
 Song, one used by the Jews on the evening of the sabbath, i, 159.  
 Sovereignty of God in making difference among believers, iii, 312.  
 Spanhemius, his confutation of Camero, i, 72.  
 Sprinkling, a Divinely-instituted sign of covenant benefits communicated, iii, 628.  
 — blood of, why so called, iv, 380.  
 Sufferings of Christ, how necessary, ii, 211. For the gospel, how honorable, 227; profitable and safe, 228.  
 — of Christ, the general causes of them, iii, 44. Their effects, 45. Instructive, when according to God's will, 69. God's love prevents not his people to undergo them, 69.  
 Suretiship of Christ, the security of the new covenant, iii, 330.  
 Surety differs from a Mediator, iii, 381. What, 385. Christ the, of the new covenant, how, 386.  
 Syrian account of the Grecian empire, i, 234.  
 T.  
 Tabernacle, Christ the true, iii, 441. Structure and furniture of the, explained, 510.  
 Tacitus, his testimony about the time of Christ's death, i, 259.  
 Talmud, Jerusalem, compiled by Rabbi Johanna, i, 111. Babylonian, by Rabbi Asa, *ib*. Contents of the, *ib*.  
 Targums, the import of the phrase "the Word of God," in the i, 163.  
 Teaching, what sort of, under the Old Testament, iii, 515. Observations on, 523.  
*Tenax*, its signification explained, ii, 138.  
*Tenax*, its import, iii, 331.  
 Temple, the glory of the second, what, i, 210.  
 Temptations, their danger and relief, ii, 276.  
 Testament, how distinguished from a covenant, iii, 615. New, wherein like those of men, 618. Wherein unlike, *ib*.  
 Theodoret, his remark concerning *mos regis*, i, 312.  
*Thesaurus*, Dr. Owen's book so called i, 25.  
*Thes*, remarks on, ii, 192.  
 Threatenings, evan, elical, ii, 154. Of God, their stability, 169.  
 Tithes, whether necessary by the light of nature, iii, 287.  
 Travail of the Redeemer's soul, observations on, iii, 52.  
 Trinity, personal transactions concerning man in the, i, 309.  
 Types, remarks on the, ii, 71, 355.  
 U.  
 Vindicia evangelica, its character, i, 24.  
 Virgin, the term vindicated against the exceptions of the Jews, i, 269.  
 Unbelief, in a time of trial a provoking sin, ii, 373. When it riseth to its height, 376. A tempting of God, when, 381. Negative and privative, 403. How it operates, 407. The root of backslidings, 413. All, accompanied with rebellion, 437. Glorifies the greatest severities of God, 458. The oath of God engaged against it, 459. Observations on, 461.  
 — the great danger of, iv, 254.



- Unbelief, the duty of ministers to declare it, 390.
- Union with Christ, the principal of spiritual enjoyments, ii, 430. The great evidence thereof, what, 431. Of our nature, to the person of Christ as high priest, a standing perpetual advantage to the church, 381.
- Universe, momentarily supported by Christ, ii, 53.
- Voice of God irresistible without final hardening, ii, 353.
- Utensils of the most holy place, iii, 499.
- W.
- Watchfulness, the duty of, ii, 411.
- Whoremongers, and adulterers, their doom, iv, 416.
- Wife, Dr. Owen's first, her character, i, 17. *Note.* His second, her character, 38. *Note.*
- Wilderness, no security against sin or punishment, ii, 383.
- Wilkins, Bishop, against the conventicle bill, i, 31. His friendship to Dr. Owen, 33.
- Will of the Father and Son, how concur in making the covenant, i, 332.
- Wisdom of Solomon, St. Jerome's opinion of the, i, 67. Used for an intelligent person, 317.
- Wood, Anthony, his character of Dr. Owen, i, 39.
- Word of God, what it imports, i, 163. The notions of the philosophers and Mahometans about it, 164. *Note.*
- the danger of losing it, ii, 142. Its steadfastness, 162. Its efficacy, 353.
- Word of righteousness, God requires that Christians should be skilful in the, iii, 101. Of the gospel is food provided for men's souls, 104. What necessary to make it profitable, 219.
- Worship, on what founded, ii, 84.
- evangelical, its glory, iii, 344. How God is glorified by it, 459.
- Y.
- York, Duke of, his discourses with Dr. Owen, i, 34.
- Z.
- Zen, remarks on, ii, 548.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

It may probably occur, that the last clause of chap. vi, 6, is not insisted upon in the Exposition; but the reason is, that nothing is said on it in the original, (and if the omission was out of design) it is presumed, that the Doctor thought that the clause was already sufficiently explained in the words—"Fall away,"—and that—"Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,"—is only exegetical of the former; for what is it to fall away from Christianity? It is, in effect, to justify the barbarous conduct of the Redeemer's crucifiers; and by evident implication to repeat the same thing; and the consideration would be still more striking to those who were any ways concerned in his actual sufferings. There is no medium in this case, between owning Christ as a Savior, and regarding him as worthy of crucifixion. And the impossibility of reclaiming such *total apostates*, appears, when we consider who it is from whom they fall away, viz. the glorious Son of God, and ONLY SAVIOR of sinners.

# A

## TABLE OF TEXTS,

MORE OR LESS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS WORK.

### GENESIS.

Chap.	Ver.	Vol.	Page.
1	26, 27	1	309
2	1	1	130
2	17	1	122
3	15	1	153
3	8, 9	1	163
4	3—5	4	128
4	10	4	133
5	29	4	148
6	5	1	125
9	26	3	275
12	1—3	1	149
12	2	4	157
12	2, 3	3	235
14	18	3	277
14	19, 20	3	284
14	20	1	301
18	18	1	149
18	1—3	1	165
22	12	4	197
22	18	1	140
24	17	1	277
28	12—15	2	128
28	20—22	1	163
32	24, 26, 30	1	166
35	21	1	153
41	45	1	301
44	1	2	4
48	17—19	2	48
49	1	2	4
49	1—10	1	153
49	3—8	1	200
49	8—10	1	196
49	10	3	472
50	25	4	219

### EXODUS.

3	2—6	1	168
3	14	4	146
12	11	3	320
12	42	1	153
13	10	4	216
19	18—20	1	169
49	19	4	361, 366

### Chap. Ver. Vol. Page.

20	2, 3	2	317
23	14	1	173
23	20—22	1	169
23	21	1	173
24	2—4	2	371
25	31	3	536
26	33, 34	3	538, 542
29	2—4	2	371
29	16—21	4	57
31	17	2	532
40	9—11	2	308

### LEVITICUS.

4	3	3	425
4	17	2	59
16	12, 13	3	404
16	14	3	553

### NUMBERS.

6	22—27	3	285
12	7	2	283
14	22	2	340
14	34	2	508
19	2	3	588
19	17, 18	3	589
24	17	1	261
27	3	2	441

### DEUTERONOMY.

4	24	4	398
5	2	2	149
17	18, 19	4	30
18	15	2	6
18	15—19	1	155
21	22	3	54
29	18	4	341
29	28	2	88

### JOSHUA.

1	5	4	387
5	13—15	1	171
10	24	2	115
24	2, 3	3	242, 276
24	19	1	170
29	19	2	230

Chap.	Ver. Vol. Page.	Psalm.	Ver. Vol. Page.
	<b>JUDGES.</b>		
4	10 2 216	80	15 1 155
		84	7 3 206
	<b>RUTH.</b>	89	27 2 18
3	15 1 155	89	30 2 71
		91	12 1 126
	<b>I. SAMUEL.</b>	97	7 2 79
2	3 2 456	102	2 100
2	20 1 154	105	7—11 2 339
3	14 4 73	110	4 1 300
4	22 2 42	119	18 2 446
		119	70 1 126
	<b>II. SAMUEL.</b>	138	2 2 445
7	14 2 70	139	2, 3 2 343
22	39 2 115	140	2 2 385
23	3 1 154		
	<b>JOB.</b>	<b>Chap. PROVERBS.</b>	
5	23 1 329	2	2—5 2 175
18	14 2 195	8	13 2 200
19	25 1 151	8	22—31 1 317
26	13 4 126	30	17 1 203
26	14 2 31	30	19 1 269
	<b>PSALMS.</b>		<b>ECCLESIASTES.</b>
2	2 1 155	9	14 1 126
2	7 2 112		<b>CANTICLES.</b>
2	8 1 151	2	17 3 335
2	7 1 326		<b>ISAIAH.</b>
8	6 2 115	2	2—4 1 150—287
18	2 2 239	4	2 1 151
19	2 104	5	1, 2 2 362—389
22	1 3 41	6	9, 10 2 366
22	1—22 1 276	7	10—16 1 266
22	22 2 239	8	18 2 240
22	30 1 279	9	1, 2 2 479
30	3 3 41	9	6 1 158
40	7, 8 1 324	9	7 2 92
40	7, 8 3 63	11	1 1 158
45	2 1 155	11	10 1 151
45	6, 7 2 91—96	16	1—5 1 159
46	7 2 145	19	25 1 152
51	7 4 413	28	5 1 159
69	20 2 583	28	21 2 454
69	20 4 94	32	17 4 00
69	22 2 306	35	7 2 44
70	2 3 37	42	2 3 51
72	6 2 139	42	4 1 152
74	2 3 279	42	8 2 616
78	61 2 42	42	1—7 1 384

Chap.	Ver.	Vol.	Page.	Chap.	Ver.	Vol.	Page.
43	1—10	1	159				
43	9	1	173				
46	6	1	50				
46	8	1	279				
49	6	1	132				
51	17	2	23				
52	13	1	159—277				
53	1	1	183, 277				
53	6	3	46				
53	10	4	28				
53	11	2	311				
55	4	2	214				
59	4, 5	1	23				
62	3	4	193				
63	9	1	173				
63	19	2	530				
<b>JEREMIAH.</b>							
23	5	1	159				
23	13—15	1	159				
30	21	1	159				
31	31—33	1	256				
31	31—34	3	484, &c.				
<b>EZEKIEL.</b>							
23	31	3	84				
36	25, 26	4	57				
47	2		145				
<b>DANIEL.</b>							
9	25	1	280				
9	25, 26	1	153				
9	24—27	1	218				
9	27	2	4				
12	10	2	363				
<b>HOSEA.</b>							
1	7	1	143 <i>Note. 280</i>				
3	5	1	160				
14	2	4	414				
14	3	2	189				
14	8	1	160				
<b>MICAH.</b>							
2	13	2	216				
4	8	1	160				
5	2	1	160—264				
5	4	2	215				
<b>HABAKKUK.</b>							
	3, 4	4	103				
<b>HAGGAI.</b>							
	3—9	1	205				
	6, 7	4	391				
<b>ZECHARIAH.</b>							
	8	1	160				
	9	2	44—98				
	13	1	300, 332				
	9	1	279				
<b>MALACHI.</b>							
	1	1	173, 216				
	1, 2	2	76				
<b>MATTHEW.</b>							
	16	3	207				
	17	3	266				
	33—37	3	247				
	37, 38	4	161				
	11	2	17				
	23	2	391				
	27	2	293				
	29, 30	3	339				
	20	2	561				
	3	2	367				
	24, 25	4	161				
	23, 24	4	287				
	28	1	298				
	44	2	110				
	26	3	85				
	34	4	194				
	46	3	42				
	18	2	21				
	20	2	350				
<b>LUKE.</b>							
	4	2	15				
	23	1	263				
	16	2	371				
	32	4	296				
	41, 42	2	364				
	43, 44	2	365				
	31, 32	2	573				
	44	3	47				

Chap.	Ver.	Vol.	Page.	Chap.	Ver.	Vol.	Page.
<b>JOHN.</b>				<b>I. CORINTHIANS.</b>			
1	3	2	23 <i>Note.</i>	1	17	1	74
1	14	2	19	2	5—7	1	61
1	17	2	15	2	6	3	109
1	18	2	292	2	9	3	388
1	51	2	128	2	13	1	75
2	20	1	206	2	14	2	518
3	34	2	292	3	6, 7	2	139
6	4	2	208	4	9	2	132
6	32	3	439	11	10	2	132
7	16	2	28	<b>II. CORINTHIANS.</b>			
8	6	2	240	2	16	2	157
12	32	2	251	4	6	2	41
12	34	3	394	4	17	4	326
14	28	1	330	4	18	2	142
17	2	1	350	7	9	4	329
19	30	3	333	8	9	2	200
<b>ACTS.</b>				10	6	2	157
2	18—20	2	359	11	25	1	89
2	21	2	361	<b>GALATIANS.</b>			
2	23, 24	2	422	3	15	3	617
2	36	2	21	3	19	3	369
5	41	2	228	3	20	3	463
16	14	2	138—141	3	19—24	3	471
<b>ROMANS.</b>				4	6	2	41
1	4	2	63	4	29	4	132
1	14, 15	2	233	<b>EPHESIANS.</b>			
1	16	4	193	1	8, 9	2	27
1	32	2	150	1	10	2	21
3	25	2	273	1	22	2	19
4	16	3	608	2	8	2	164
4	18—21	3	239	2	12	8	467
5	12	1	122	2	14—17	3	335
6	4	2	22 <i>Note.</i>	2	15	3	627
6	13	2	142	3	9	2	26
7	1—6	3	369	3	10	2	125
8	19—22	2	36	3	17	3	103
8	29	2	227	3	18, 19	3	66
8	35—39	2	496	4	2	2	208
8	37	2	223	4	16	2	414
9	33	3	67	5	11	3	111
11	36	2	22 <i>Note.</i>	5	26	2	47
12	1	2	99	<b>PHILIPPIANS.</b>			
14	9	2	315	2	5	2	201
14	17	3	334	2	6	2	313
15	5	2	4				

Chap.	Ver.	Vol	P	ge.	Chap.	Ver.	Vol	Page.
2	9	11	2	35	2	2	3	93
4		13	2	220	2	3	4	114
<b>COLOSSIANS.</b>					2	5	2	309
1	6	2		43	3	20	1	81
1	15	2		41—78	3	21, 22	4	151
1	19	2		15—292	4	1	2	201
1	26	2		26	4	14	2	497
2	3	2		146	5	4	2	312
2	9	3		440, 442, 515	<b>II. PETER.</b>			
2	15	2		574	1	4	4	324
2	17	4		4	1	21	1	64
2	18	2		134	2	5	4	148
<b>I. THESSALONIANS.</b>					8	2	2	363
1	3	3		195	3	4	3	243
2	7	3		18	3	15, 16	1	82—84
4	18	2		422	<b>I. JOHN.</b>			
<b>I. TIMOTHY.</b>					2	2	1	298
2	5, 6	3		381, 462	4	16	2	29
3	16	1		178	5	3	2	98
4	4—8	2		37	5	4	2	223
5	2	2		132	<b>II. JOHN.</b>			
6	8	4		418	1	9	2	410
<b>II. TIMOTHY.</b>					<b>JUDE.</b>			
3	7	2		285	3	2		9
3	12	3		68	6	1		131
<b>TITUS.</b>					9	3		457
1	16	2		397	<b>REVELATION.</b>			
3	5	2		47	1	1	2	12
<b>JAMES.</b>					1	8—13	2	318
1	15	3		111	1	18	2	547
1	21	3		85	1	18	3	251
1	24	2		484	5	6	2	50
2	18	3		207	5	9, 10	4	376
2	20	3		224	6	13	2	35
5	10	3		234	10	6	2	378
6	12	2		247	13	8	3	648
<b>I. PETER.</b>					14	6—8	2	361
1	23	2		164	22	8	3	184

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